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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

ACCORDING TO THE METHOD OF

SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA.

BY

FATHER ALOYSIUS BELLECIO,

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

Translated from the Italian Version of
FATHER ANTHONY BRESCIANI, S.J.

BY

WILLIAM HUTCH, D.D.,

CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL OF CLOYNE.

SIXTH EDITION.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



THE publication at Rome, in 1548, of the Book of Spiritual Exercises by the illustrious Founder of the Society of Jesus marks a new era in the History of Mystic Theology. Many saints before Ignatius had, no doubt, written works replete with the unction of the Holy Spirit, and admirably calculated to guide souls safely along the rugged path of Christian Perfection; but we may, nevertheless, affirm without hesitation, that the ecstatic recluse of Manresa was the first to reduce the maxims of the Spiritual Life to a well-ordered and logically connected system, and to elevate Asceticism to the dignity of a science in the strict acceptance of the term.

The approving voice of the Christian Church, for more than three centuries, has borne ample testimony to the splendid success with which the saint accomplished his difficult task. Popes, and cardinals, and bishops; the cloistered religious and the man of the world; great saints and great sinners; bold soldiers and brilliant statesmen; learned doctors

and humble mechanics; persons of both sexes, of every age, and rank, and condition, and in all parts of Christendom, have experienced the salutary influence of the Exercises upon their souls, and bear testimony to their efficacy in terms which seem to border almost on the language of exaggeration (*a*).

Among the many holy and learned Jesuits who have expounded the Spiritual Exercises of the illustrious Founder of their Society, Father Aloysius Bellecio deservedly holds a foremost place. His treatise has won the warm commendations of the most experienced masters of the spiritual life, for the clearness and logical precision of the method which he has adopted, for the weight and solidity of his sentences, for the appropriate and vigorous eloquence of his style, and for the pious unction which flows in every page, and which cannot fail to soften the heart even of the most obdurate sinner, if he only read the work attentively and with the proper dispositions.

Father Bellecio composed his treatise in Latin, and this circumstance made it, for most people, a sealed fountain; owing, however, to the zeal and active industry of his brother Jesuits, it has been translated into many modern languages. Two Italian

(*a*) See "Introduction," pp. 5-10, *infra*.

translations have appeared, and of these I have chosen for presentation to the English-speaking public that which was published in 1842, from the pen of Father Anthony Bresciani—himself a child of S. Ignatius, and a man of European fame in the world of letters. Three reasons, principally, influenced me in making this choice. First, Father Bresciani has occasionally abridged the text of Bellecio where he considered it unnecessarily diffuse, and has thus made the work more suitable for the general use of the faithful. Secondly, he has added to each meditation a compendium of the same, so that the reader may take in with a single glance, as it were, all that he had been meditating. Finally, he has slightly modified some few opinions put forward by Father Bellecio, which seemed to him too rigid; his object being not to discourage souls, while inspiring them with a salutary fear of God's judgments.

Of the English translation now offered to the public, little need be said. I have always considered that the chief excellence of a good translation consists in fidelity to the original. Wherefore, I have endeavoured to adhere to the text of Father Bresciani's work as closely as the difference of idiom (and it is very marked, indeed), between the English and Italian languages would permit; and I claim no

merit for this little volume beyond the modest one of faithfully reproducing in an English dress the admirable work of the great Italian Jesuit.

WILLIAM HUTCH.

St. Colman's College, Fermoy,
Feast of the Holy Rosary, Oct. 1st, 1874

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this translation, which consisted of three thousand copies, has been for some time out of print ; and, influenced by representations made to me from several quarters, I have judged it advisable to bring out a second edition. In preparing it for the Press, the book has been carefully revised throughout, so that I trust the present edition will be found an improvement on the former one, and will merit at least an equal share of public favour.

WILLIAM HUTCH.

St. Colman's College, Fermoy,
24th May, 1883.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH Spiritual Retreats are of very frequent occurrence in our days, nevertheless, that total change of life—the result of generous resolutions carried out with fortitude and constancy—which in times past almost invariably accompanied them, is by no means so common. Now-a-days people come out of Retreat pretty much the same as they entered it; and even though they should gain some additional fervour, and manifest some improvement in their lives, the change is but of brief duration, and at the end of a month they return to their former failings and tepidity.

What is the cause of this? Is it that the Exercises have lost that efficacy which formerly rendered them so powerful? It is not so: but it happens because people do not perform the Exercises in the

manner which S. Ignatius requires. They do not endeavour to penetrate his spirit thoroughly; they do not direct their resolutions into the proper channel; they do not attend sufficiently to the connection between the different meditations; they, for the most part, pass over the Exercise *on the Choice of a State*, around which, as a centre, all the others are grouped; and they either omit, or but glance hurriedly at some fundamental meditations—such as those on *The Kingdom of Christ*, on *The Two Standards*, on *The Three Classes of Men*, on *The Three Degrees of Humility*—which, as it were, constitute the foundation that supports the entire of this spiritual edifice. Hence they fail to derive from the Exercises all the benefit that they ought.

It is my desire, therefore, to help you, if I can, by means of this little book, and to assist you in gathering all that fruit which the Exercises usually produce when they are well performed. But shall I be able to do this of myself? May the Lord grant me His assisting grace, while on my part I shall leave nothing undone to ensure success. And that

you may know, reader, that I am not about to place before you any theories of my own, I take the liberty of informing you that I will not lay down in the following pages any doctrine which may not be found either in the work of our holy Father, S. Ignatius, or in the Directory, or in the treatises of other approved interpreters. We shall see later on what weight attached itself to the book of the Exercises ; and the authority of the Directory may be inferred from the circumstances under which it was drawn up. This work was undertaken by command of the First General Congregation, and was by its advice forwarded to all the provinces of the Society, in order that the most experienced Fathers in all places might decide whether there was anything to add to, or take from it, or whether it might be otherwise improved. The judgments and opinions of all having been forwarded to Rome, and subjected in the Fifth General Congregation to a most exact and rigorous examination, by Fathers specially deputed for that task—an examination afterwards scrupulously repeated by the Father-General Claudius

Aquaviva and the Fathers-Assistant—such opinions as seem most opportune were adopted, arranged in regular order, and collected into this Directory. It is evident, then, that the authority of this book is very great, and that you should attach very considerable importance to such extracts from it as you will find scattered through the pages of the present work.

If you only know how to avail yourself of this, and of the work of S. Ignatius, following the closely connected method in which I shall place everything before you, I, on my part, promise you the happiest results from your Retreat.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RETREAT.

THE Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius consist in a Retreat of some days, during which the soul, removed from all intercourse with the world, and shut in from all worldly distractions and cares, is solely occupied in attending, after the method proposed by the saint, to the all-important business of salvation; and while bewailing the transgressions of the past, studies to repair them by a more perfect life in the future. That you may accomplish this purpose the more successfully, I shall place before you, by way of preface, some *motives* and *counsels* for your encouragement and direction, so as to enable you to perform during these eight days all that is most necessary in order to derive solid benefit from your Retreat.

§. I. *Some motives for attending with diligence to the Spiritual Exercises.*

In the opinion of the most competent judges the qualities which mainly affect the value of any exercise may be reduced to these three, viz.—its *excellence*, which wins for it our esteem; its *utility*, which creates within us a desire of it; and its *necessity*, whereby the will is impelled to embrace that which the intellect has already recognised as being in itself both useful and excellent.

I. Now in the first place, the *excellence* of these

Spiritual Exercises may be deduced from this; Firstly, that they were inspired by God (*a*); secondly, that they were dictated by the most august Queen of Heaven (*b*); and thirdly, that they have not only merited the approval of, but have elicited the highest encomiums from the Holy See, which has recommended them with all the plenitude of its Apostolic authority to the practice of the faithful (*c*).

That this is so, is established by the Bulls themselves of the Sovereign Pontiffs; by the testimony of the auditors of the Rota, and of their Eminences the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Rites; by the universal feeling and conviction of the Society of Jesus (*d*); and by the authority of men equally remarkable for sanctity and learning—the principal among them being the Venerable Lewis da Ponte, Lanciscius, Natalis, Rosignoli, and others—who not only fearlessly assert, but prove by solid arguments that these Exercises of S. Ignatius were inspired by God, enriched by the unction of the Holy Spirit, dictated by the Blessed Virgin Mary, and finally, “of his own certain knowledge,” and without the change even of a single point, approved of, praised, and authorised by Pope Paul III.; which approbation extends to each and everything contained in them—*quoad omnia et singula in eis contenta*.

Moreover, the Sovereign Pontiffs, as Alexander

(*a*) *Lanciscius* Opusc. 18, cap. 5, and *Rosignolius* in lib. “*notizie memorabili dei essercizii spirituali*,” lib. 1, cap. 1.

(*b*) *Lud de Ponte* in *vita Marinæ de Escobar*, lib. 1, c. 5, p. 2: *Natalis* in lib. “*conversatio cœlestis*”.

(*c*) Paul III. in the Bull “*Pastoralis Officii*,” 31st July, 1548, and Julius III.

(*d*) *Directorium Exercitiorum in procœmio*, n. 2.

VII. and Benedict XIV., have attached to the due performance of these Exercises a Plenary Indulgence, "in order that by this largess of the heavenly treasures of the Church the faithful might be incited to apply themselves to a work so salutary and so pious" (i). It is no wonder then that John Camo, Bishop of Belley, while studying this work of S. Ignatius should exclaim in amazement, "O volume, all golden, and more precious than any gem! O divine book, dictated by a special light from God: book which we can never sufficiently praise: book which contains hidden within itself the manna of the desert, the marrow of the cedars of Libanus, and the mustard-seed of the Gospel." Is it possible to speak more emphatically in favour of the excellence of the Exercises?

Let this be for us a powerful incitement to perform them with all the fervour of our souls. For, if they have been dictated by God, and if he is accursed who does the work of the Lord negligently, those persons have just reason to fear, who go through the Exercises after a cold or tepid fashion, rejecting the medicine which possesses such efficacy to heal the diseases of their souls.

II. In the next place, *authority, experience, and reason*, clearly demonstrate the *utility* of this Spiritual Retreat. Firstly, as regards authority, I should be far too diffuse were I to cite the testimony of all those persons eminent for wisdom and sanctity who have lavished the highest praise on these Exercises.

(a) "Ut Christi fideles hac cœlestium Ecclesiæ thesaurorum elargitione ad vacandum salutari adeo pioque operi incitarentur." In bulla Alexandri VII., die 12 Octobr. 1657.

Of the very many whom I might quote I shall content myself with a few. S. Francis de Sales says of the Exercises, that "they are a holy method which the great servant of God, Ignatius of Loyola, introduced for the reformation of men's lives" (a). S. Charles Borromeo likewise says of them, "I have a splendid library; but it is comprised within the limits of one small book, from which alone I learn more than I could from all the other books in the world put together" (b). Pope Julius III. called the Exercises "salutary beyond measure, full of piety and of sanctity, and most useful for the spiritual advancement of souls" (c). And a great prelate styles them "hidden manna, the grain of mustard seed mentioned in the Gospel, the marrow of the cedars of Libanus, trifles in appearance, but of the greatest value in their effects" (d).

Finally, Blossius, Avila, Canisius, Strada, Suarez, and others quoted by Rossignoli call them a new school of Divine wisdom, the quintessence of ascetic doctrine, the most efficacious aid to attain in the shortest period of time to the highest degree of perfection, a most certain remedy for all evils, an armoury supplying weapons terrible to hell, and one of the most signal blessings which God has bestowed upon his Church in these latter days. In presence of such unexceptionable testimony, who will have the hardihood to deny the usefulness of the Spiritual Exercises?

Secondly, *experience* supports by facts what these

(a) Treatise on the Love of God, lib. 12, ch. 8.

(b) Bartol. Life of S. Ignatius, lib. 1, num. 18.

(c) In litteris confirmationis Exercit.

(d) Camus in Act. Sactor. ad diem, 31 Julii.

authors have advanced in their writings. For (as the Directory attests), very many, after having been well trained by these Exercises, abandoned the world to embrace the religious state; many who were already inmates of the cloister effected wonderful reformatations of their lives, nor was this the case of merely a few individuals, but even of entire monasteries; and very many secular persons, also, who had been living in every kind of vice, from which neither sermons nor entreaties nor any other ordinary means could win them, were converted merely by going through a course of the Spiritual Exercises, and afterwards steadfastly persevered in virtue to the end of their lives (*a*). In a word, unusual movements of the soul, extraordinary changes of life, and wonderful progress in the paths of virtue and perfection are the ordinary fruits gathered from this holy Retreat.

It is certain that the society of Jesus acknowledges itself indebted to this little book for its establishment, its growth, its extension, its strength, and its preservation to the present day. S. Francis de Sales, S. Charles Borromeo, S. Philip Neri, S. Francis Borgia, S. Francis Xavier, S. Teresa, and S. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi gratefully attribute to it the commencement or the growth of their sanctity. Lewis Blossius, Lewis of Granada, the Bishop of Torres, the Cardinal Henry, afterwards King of Portugal, Bellarmin, Peter Camus, Faber, Lainez, Natalis, and countless others cited by Rossignoli, tell us that they were indebted to these Exercises for having embraced a more perfect life. Add to these those countless martyrs of India, who

drew from the Spiritual Exercises that noble fortitude, which enabled them to endure for the sake of Jesus Christ the many terrible torments to which they were subjected.

Thirdly : now the *reason* of all this is most evident. For, on the one hand, by means of this happy retirement from the bustle of worldly business and the distractions of temporal cares, we effectually remove those many obstacles which are so dangerously calculated to exclude the lights of heaven from our souls. On the other hand, by meditating on the eternal truths for eight continuous days, the soul is more thoroughly prepared to receive that abundant downpour of graces, with which heaven is wont to inundate our souls during the solitude of this retirement. What wonder is it, then, that after the removal of so many obstacles, with our souls so well disposed, and with such abundant favours, placed within our reach by God, lives which were once disorderly should experience a total reformation.

If, then, the *utility* of these Exercises is so great, how culpable shall we not be if we neglect to banish tepidity from our souls by that self-same means by which so many others have become saints ! if that which has proved the balsam of life to so many others should become poison to us ! How appalling at the hour of death will be this thought : I was bound to become a saint in virtue of my vocation : I could have sanctified myself by means of the Exercises, and, nevertheless, I have always lived shamefully enslaved by tepidity. Though living in such close proximity to the Divine light, to the fountain of grace, to the heavenly fire, yet I have always re-

mained in spiritual darkness, aridity, and coldness. O what a thorn will this be in your heart at the hour of death!

III. The urgent *necessity* of this holy Retreat is proved, in the first place, by the present condition of your soul, which cannot discover any more expeditious, or more powerful means to effect its reformation. For, the many rebellious passions which we have not as yet brought under subjection, the many vices which we have not as yet eradicated, the many evil habits which we have not as yet cast off; moreover, the many troublesome offices we may be called upon to discharge, the many afflictions which await us, the many temptations we shall have to combat—all point out to us the absolute necessity that exists for applying the axe to the root of our disorders during these days of grace, and of plucking from our soul every germ of sin, while, at the same time, we lay, deep and strong, the foundation of all those virtues which the sanctity of our state, the abundance of grace which has been lavished upon us, and God's will, both expect and demand.

Secondly: moreover, the love which we bear to the Society (of Jesus) as our mother, requires that we should apply ourselves with all earnestness to the due performance of the Exercises, inasmuch as she herself declares in the Directory (a), "that it is principally to them she owes her existence and gradual growth," and it is on them alone she relies for her future preservation. Wherefore, we must regard as his mother's ungrateful enemy, whosoever neglects or performs with tepidity that which sup-

(a) In proœmio. n. 7.

pines the most efficacious and most necessary help towards her preservation.

Finally, this Retreat may be, perhaps, the last you shall ever make: perhaps the final grace is annexed to it: on it, perhaps, depends your perfection, and, perhaps, the salvation of others also whom God has decreed to convert through you agency, if you render yourself a fitting instrument for his purposes. It would be extremely rash to commit this important "*perhaps*" to chance, while it is absolutely certain that you will never have reason to repent if you attend to it with diligence. Therefore, select the more secure course; otherwise be afraid and tremble; for "*unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required*" (a).

From all these considerations, then, we may infer not only the very great *excellence* and *utility* of the Spiritual Exercises, but likewise their urgent *necessity*. Wherefore, we ought to apply ourselves to them with all possible fervour; and to do so successfully, we ought to attend to the following counsels, which are all directed to this end. These counsels are of three kinds. Some regard the *interior* preparation of the soul, others the *external* arrangement of matters which should precede the Retreat, and others, in fine, have reference to the practices to be observed during those days of retirement.

N.B. *The third number (III.) of this first paragraph may furnish matter for the meditation or consideration to be made in the forenoon or afternoon of the day preceding the Retreat. The other numbers, as well as the following paragraphs, will furnish matter for*

spiritual reading both before and after dinner. Care should be taken to read at least the first and second of the following counsels on the day preceding the Retreat.

§. II. *Counsels regarding the interior preparation of the Soul.*

I. Since the fruit of this holy Retreat consists neither in an abundance of heavenly lights, nor in the gift of copious tears, nor in the full enjoyment of heavenly consolations, nor in merely employing more time than usual in prayer, or in spiritual reading, or in interior recollection, but rather, first, in a solid *reformation* of our lives ; secondly, in a more marked *progress* in virtue ; and finally, in a more perfect *knowledge* and a more scrupulous *accomplishment* of the Divine will concerning ourselves and our state of life ; we must undertake the Exercises in this spirit, and with the intention of becoming, in fact, through their means, quite different persons from what we were before—entirely changed, and in everything pliable to the will of God. Nor ought this resolution to be limited merely to the commencement of the Exercises, but *to the very end* we ought solely, perseveringly, and most earnestly keep this object in view (*a*).

II. To accomplish this purpose we must, on the day preceding the Retreat (after having made a cursory examination of the state of our soul), direct our attention to the three following points :—First, we must conceive an earnest desire to know God's will in our regard, repeating oftentimes in the course of

the day that prayer of the Psalmist, "*O Lord, teach me to do thy will*" (a). Secondly, we must discover that particular *vice* or failing which is the source whence our other faults spring, in order to pluck it out from the very root. Thirdly, we must determine that particular *virtue* of which we stand in greatest need, that we may afterwards plant it carefully in our souls. To these matters, as to a double end, we ought to direct all our meditations, reflections, and spiritual lectures. Remember that this counsel is of paramount importance.

III. We ought to enter upon the Exercises, in the first place, with a most thorough conviction that we need them very much; that our future spiritual progress depends entirely on the use we shall make of them; and that we are about to undertake a matter of the *very greatest importance*. The greater the esteem we entertain for them the more earnest will be our endeavours to perform them well. Secondly, we ought to commence them with a humble *distrust* of our own strength; because God rejects the proud, and bestows his heavenly favours upon the humble only. Thirdly, we should commence them with a soul prepared to act in a generous manner with God, and firmly resolved to deny Him nothing; to place no limits to His grace; to make no exceptions in our own favour; but generously to sacrifice all things, and to perform or to avoid whatever it is God's will that we should perform or avoid, with an absolute *indifference* to everything—*being very careful, however, not to form incautiously any resolution which we would be unwilling to abandon after-*

(a) Psalm cxlii., 10.

words. Fourthly, we ought, moreover, to commence them with a firm *hope* that the infinite goodness of God, which has granted us the will to enter upon this holy Retreat, will grant us, likewise, the grace to perform it in a proper manner, since He wills our sanctification. To commence the Exercises with such a preparation as this, will be, assuredly, a happy presage of the choice favours and sublime virtues which we shall acquire through their means.

IV. Since venial sins and an over-due engagement of our thoughts in temporal affairs are an obstacle to heavenly graces, which God withdraws from the sinful and worldly-minded, we ought to cultivate a singular purity of conscience and great recollection of spirit, not only during the actual period of the Exercises (for at this time even a slight fault would prove a serious obstacle to the reception of God's favours), but also in the course of the preceding day.

It not unfrequently happens, even in the case of religious persons, that the day preceding the Retreat is given up to a certain kind of dissipation, as if this were a necessary recreation for the mind before entering on so many days of meditation. This is a most insidious artifice on the part of the devil, who gains very largely by causing the first days of the Retreat, on which the success of all the others may depend, to be spent fruitlessly and in a state of tepidity.

§. III. *Counsels regarding the external arrangement of our affairs.*

I. On the day previous to our entry into Retreat, we should arrange all our affairs in such a manner

that they be not afterwards to us an occasion of distractions. We should put our apartment in order, and remove from it everything—even our books—which might distract us, so that (as far as possible) it may contain nothing except what is of service for the purposes of the Exercises.

II. We should prepare two small blank books, one for the purpose of writing down the lights and inspirations with which God may favour us, and the other to contain the resolutions which we may form for the future, together with the motives which impelled us most strongly to adopt them. This counsel is of the greatest importance. Remember, however, that (as the Directory observes) these manuscript notes should be very brief, and not extended into diffuse essays, thus appropriating to this purpose the time which has been allotted to other occupations (*a*).

III. We must beg of the Lord, by frequent and fervent prayer, grace to derive good fruit from the Exercises, frequently visiting the Most Holy Sacrament for this purpose, reciting the Office or the Rosary with this intention, and with more than ordinary devotion, and selecting some heavenly advocates under whose guardianship we may place ourselves in a very special manner during those days.

IV. Even though the person who performs the Exercises should be (as the Directory remarks) himself a man of learning and prudence, and skilled in the direction of souls, nevertheless, during those days he should not trust at all in his own prudence

(*a*) Directory, ch. 2 and 3.

and learning, but should place himself without reserve in the hands of his director. He should regard him absolutely as the instrument of the Lord, sent for his guidance. Wherefore, he should neither conceal nor dissemble anything, but sincerely lay open before him his entire heart. Let him be obedient to him in all things, and use no other meditations except such as he shall prescribe, and in the same order in which he shall direct him to use them. The same rule must be followed when there is question of practising mortifications or other penances. In a word, let him be persuaded that the more diligently and exactly he follows the counsels of his director, the better will he dispose himself to receive more abundant graces from God, since God is highly pleased with such humility and simplicity, and loves to hold converse with the soul which is adorned with these virtues. Such is the doctrine of the Directory.

§. IV. *Counsels to be observed during the time of the Exercises.*

I. During the entire time of this Retreat we must continually cherish a strict spirit of recollection. To attain this end, we must first of all keep a jealous guard over our *senses*—principally over our eyes, by not fixing them upon any person ; over our ears, by excluding all news, letters, messages, &c. ; and over our tongues, by scrupulously observing a most rigorous silence. Secondly, we must restrain our *imagination*, by not entertaining any thought whatever which is foreign to the Exercises, acting, in fact, as if we had no other business on earth outside of them. To such an extent should we practise this restraint,

that we ought to shut out from our minds even pious thoughts, when they have no connection with the subject matter of the past or the coming meditation. Thirdly, we must rigidly observe *solitude*, by not leaving our apartment without necessity, and by holding ourselves absolutely disengaged from every other occupation ; so that not only during the course of the day, but even after our meals, we should refrain from reading, or writing, or meditating on anything, except what may have been marked out for that day, or may happen to be connected with the Exercises, or with the object to which they are directed. Nay more, we ought to abstain also from those manual labours which fatigue the body too much, and render the mind dissipated (a). Wherefore, S. Ignatius writes, "*the more detached anyone is from all his friends and acquaintances, and from every human care, the greater will be the progress which he will make. And the more secluded and solitary the soul is, the better disposed will she become to seek and to find her Creator*" (b).

In truth, we ought to imitate that celebrated minister of the German emperor, who having received, while making the Exercises in the Jesuit College at Spire, a letter from his sovereign, bade the attendants not deliver it to him, saying, that the business which he was just then transacting with the King of kings would not permit him to bestow any thought upon an earthly monarch.

II. We ought to perform the meditations, firstly, in a *reverential posture*, particularly during that portion

(a) Directory, ch. 2.

(b) S. Ignatius, Lib. Exerc. ad n. 20.

of the time which is occupied by the operations of the will ; because a greater degree of reverence is required at that time than while the reasoning faculties of the intellect are engaged. Secondly, we ought to spend in meditation *the whole of the time* allotted to that Exercise, to the extent even of adding to rather than taking from it, especially during periods of weariness and aridity. And, in order that the meditation may not degenerate into a mere dry study, we should exercise our affections more than our reasoning faculties. Thirdly, we should make the meditation with *fervour* as regards its practical application to ourselves, being particularly careful, however, not to make rashly, or without due deliberation, any promise or vow, and not to injure our health by a too intense application (*a*). This is a danger which (as the Directory remarks) is apt to occur, either when the soul strives to force herself to devotion and tears in moments of aridity and desolation, or when, on the other hand, she enjoys an extraordinary abundance of heavenly consolations. During the meditation, it will be quite sufficient to bestow on the subject that diligence which men usually employ when conversing with some exalted personage, or when discoursing in public. For the real solid advantage of the meditation does not consist in a forced attention, nor in making extraordinary efforts to excite ourselves to tears ; but is to be sought in the knowledge of those truths, and in those movements of the will which proceed from an interior heavenly light.

Wherefore, in the moments of consolation two

(*a*) S. Ignatius in lib. Exercit. annot. iii.

things are to be attended to. First, we must direct these consolations to the amendment of our lives, and to the strengthening of our good resolutions, in order that all solid advantage may not vanish together with that spiritual sweetness which we have tasted. Secondly, we ought to prepare our soul for the period of desolation and aridity, in order that it may not come upon us unprepared. When, however, aridity and desolation *do* come upon us, we must, first, observe "the additions" more accurately (a); secondly, we must humble ourselves before the Lord; thirdly, we must persevere in prayer with patience and constancy, mindful of the Divine promise: "*If it make any delay wait for it: for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack*" (b).

III. The books selected for spiritual reading should not only be good and useful, but they should be such as tend to nourish those affections which we then seek to cultivate. Wherefore, we ought to suit the lecture to the subject of the meditation, and to read it, not in a hurried, careless manner, but with due reflection, weighing well what we read, and drawing from it the necessary fruits. "The Lives of the Saints" should also be selected for this purpose, and accommodated to the spiritual necessities of the person who is engaged in the Exercises. We must be careful, however, that the pleasure which we derive from reading should not so captivate us, as

(a) By the "ten additions," as they are called, are meant certain recommendations of S. Ignatius to assist us in making the Exercises well, and obtaining our requests from God. Their substance will be found given above in the text of the Introduction.—*Translator*.

(b) Habacuc ii., v. 3.

to make us curtail the time allotted to meditation. This is always first in importance, and every other Exercise must be held subordinate to it. Nay, even some short time before meditation, we must leave off everything else in which we may be engaged, in order that the mind may be entirely free for the proper discharge of that duty.

IV. The following points should form the subject of the particular examen, to be made twice each day during the retreat—viz., *a great exactness in performing with due fervour the works prescribed; and an accurate observance of the distribution of time, and of the additions laid down by S. Ignatius.* This is the substance of these “additions”—first, before going to sleep to fix the hour of rising, and review in your mind the points of the meditation for the following morning. Secondly, standing a few paces from the place where you are about to make your meditation, to place yourself in the presence of God. Thirdly, should any particular point touch your heart and excite your affections, you ought to dwell upon it, without caring to pass on to anything else; “for it is not the abundance of knowledge, but of interior feeling and sweetness that is wont to satisfy the longing of the soul” (a). Fourthly, at the end of the meditation you should examine how it has succeeded. Fifthly, during the first and third weeks you should avoid all joyful thoughts, even though they be pious ones, and should rather occupy yourself with such reflections as tend to excite a holy sadness. For this purpose you should keep your room darkened. Sixthly, you should avoid laughter, conversation, and

(a) S. Ignatius, annot. 2.

looking fixedly at any one. Seventhly, you should increase your penitential exercises, viz., the use of the hair-shirt, of the discipline, the practice of abstinence, sleeping on a harder bed than usual, &c. ; provided, however, that there be no danger of injuring your health, and that you retrench nothing of the time which is necessary for sleep (a).

The Directory says that we must use great diligence in the observance of these additions ; because the more exact each one is in this particular, the more readily and the more abundantly will he find the spiritual fruit for which he is seeking" (b).

§. V. *Plan of the Exercises.*

I. The Exercises of S. Ignatius are divided into four weeks, which are reckoned not so much by the number of days as by the matter of the meditations. The first week corresponds to the *purgative* way ; because during that time we endeavour, as it were, to cleanse our souls anew by means of a knowledge of ourselves, and by a hatred of sin. The second and third weeks correspond to the *illuminative* way ; because by meditating at this period on the virtues practised by Jesus Christ in His public and private life, our souls become wonderfully enlightened, and we are strongly prompted to imitate Him by means of these virtues. The fourth week corresponds to the *unitive* way ; because by contemplating all this time the glory of Christ, we become intimately united to God, our last end, by means of spiritual love.

From this it is evident that the Exercises furnish

(a) Lib. exercitior. ad finem 1 hebdom.

(b) Directory, ch. 3, n. 1.

us with a short and easy means of attaining to the highest perfection, by detaching us from sin, and by gradually conducting us through the different virtues to a union with God. So that not only is the end to which they aspire most sublime in itself, but the means employed are most admirably suited to its accomplishment.

II. For, in the first place, after considering the sublimity of our last *end* for which we have been created, the will is impelled to make every effort towards its attainment. That this may proceed in a regular and orderly manner, we must (1.) first of all remove the obstacles which lie in our path, that is to say our sins, by detesting and confessing them. But to prevent us from relapsing into our sinful ways, we are still further frightened away from them by the consideration of death, judgment, hell, and of the manner in which God has punished the sin of the angels, and that of our first parents.

(2.) Having removed these obstacles, and having returned anew with the Prodigal Son into the grace of our Heavenly Father, in order that we may be enabled to advance in the path of perfection and attain our last end, we are offered a *support*, namely, the example of Jesus Christ, than whom there is no guide more skilled, no way more secure, no companion more faithful, no helper more ready or more powerful to render us assistance. For this reason his virtues and the principal mysteries of his life are proposed to us as the subject of our meditation.

(3.) That we may be the more courageous to imitate Him, *even in a more perfect manner*, we are invited to make the three celebrated meditations, on the two standards, the three classes of men, and the three degrees of humility. But in order that we

may remain fixed in our holy choice, we are confirmed in our resolution of leading a more perfect life, even in the midst of adversity and persecutions, and at the sacrifice of health and reputation, if necessary, by the example of Jesus *suffering*.

(4.) Finally, encouraged by the glory of Jesus arisen from the dead, and buoyed up with the hope of the many rewards reserved for us, we are sweetly transported by charity to the love of God, to an intimate union with Him, and to an absolute conformity of our desires with His Divine will, in which consists all our perfection and our happiness, and which is the only end aimed at in this Retreat.

III. What has been said explains sufficiently the plan of the Exercises, and I shall only add that the Directory styles the first week the basis and foundation of the others, and says that it must never be omitted on any account. From which we may infer with what fervour we ought to attend to the Exercises as signed for that week, since the happy results of the entire Retreat depend upon it. The object aimed at during this week, as well as the fruit to be derived from it is threefold, viz. :—1, an absolute indifference to all the means by which God shall be pleased to conduct us to our last end ; 2, an intense sorrow and detestation for the sins which have caused us to stray so far from this our end ; and 3, *a thorough knowledge* of ourselves ; that is, of the passions which hold sway in our hearts, of the vicious habits which enslave us, and of the source whence spring those defects which insensibly draw us aside from the pursuit of our end, and are our greatest stumbling-block in the path of perfection (a).

(a) Directory, ch. 11 and 12.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

ACCORDING TO THE METHOD OF

SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA.



TO THE READER.

Those points of the Meditation which cannot be gone through within the hour marked out for that Exercise, may be taken up at whatever other time is found most convenient. The matter assigned for Spiritual Lecture will not be found inconveniently long, especially if a portion of the afternoon, as well as of the forenoon, be devoted to it, or it be substituted for the "Lives of the Saints." An entire hour should be employed in the consideration, and during this time it should engross our undivided attention. What regards the examination of our state, may be read after the evening meditation, or at some other convenient hour. For the rest, whoever wishes to observe the recommendation laid down by S. Ignatius, of not reading, or meditating upon anything except what has relation to the subject of the exercises, will find in this little book alone quite enough of matter to occupy his thoughts during the entire eight days of the Retreat.

First Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the end of Man.

FIRST POINT.

You have been created by God. Now, examine yourself, and reflect *who* it is that has created you, *whence* He has drawn you, *what* it is He has made you, *and with what love* He was influenced in bestowing upon you your existence? 1. And in the first place, it was not one of the Angels or of the Powers, neither was it one of the Principalities, or of the Cherubim who created you, but it was *God* Himself—that God who has no need of any one, and who is infinitely rich and happy in Himself. 2. And He created you *from nothing*, calling into action (so to speak) on your account all the Omnipotence of His power; for, since there is an immeasurable distance between a state of existence and of mere possibility, it needed all the infinite power of God's arm to bring you into existence when as yet you had no being. 3. And *He has created you "to His own image and likeness"* (a); stamping you, as it were, with a ray of His divinity, endowing you with a form which rivals that of the most Holy Trinity, and making you little less than the angels (b). In a word, that God, who is all-sufficient to Himself,

(a) Genesis iv. 26.

(b) Psalm viii. 6.

has not created you devoid of feeling, nor a brute beast, nor lacking the use of reason; but He has formed you full of life and intelligence, and capable of enjoying everlasting happiness. 4. And this He has done *with an infinite and eternal love*, loving you with His entire powers from all eternity, in preference to innumerable other beings who would have served Him in a more perfect manner. He has left them in their nothingness, and in their stead He has created you; selecting and embracing with that benign affection of His, without any antecedent merit on your part, you a most ungrateful sinner; nay more, He has fostered you as His child in His paternal bosom, caressing you, and protecting you with singular Providence. Therefore, pay particular attention to the consequence, *therefore you are bound to serve God*.

It is from God you have received those faculties of your soul, those intellectual powers which you possess, those human feelings with which you are endowed, and the members which constitute your body. They are treasures, then, entrusted to you with a bountiful hand, that you may traffic with them. Therefore, you are bound to *employ them in the service of God*. You might have been born lame, deaf, blind, dumb, an idiot, or crazy. *Wherefore*, since, through the bounty of your Creator, you are in the enjoyment of those natural gifts, *you are bound to employ them in the service of God*. Who if he be not an unbeliever, will dare to question these truths?

SECOND POINT.

You have been created by God to serve Him in this life, and to enjoy Him in the life to come. To serve

God is man's *paramount* business, and his *essential* end. God might, if He chose, have left us eternally buried in our nothingness ; but having been pleased to create us, it was impossible that He could bestow life upon us for any other end. No one has been created to the end that He might abound in riches, honours, and pleasures ; that he might gain friends, or store up knowledge, or win himself a name in the world ; but he has been created to serve God: "*For this is all man*"(a), namely to be *essentially* the servant of God.

2. To serve God is man's *sole* end, and his *only* business : even though he should have managed with the greatest applause the affairs of the entire world ; though he should have governed all its kingdoms, and counselled all its princes and emperors ; though he should have accumulated immense wealth, attained to exalted rank, and acquired power almost beyond limit ; yet, if he have not rendered to God that service which is His due, he is, in the judgment of heaven, but a cypher, and a useless burthen upon the earth. On the other hand, even though a person should have in nowise laboured for the world, though his lifetime should have been spent in a sick chamber, or he should have lain hidden away in some obscure corner, unnoticed or despised by all, yet, if he have only served God, he has done enough, because he has conducted to a successful issue that work for which alone he was created.

3. To serve God is our *last* end, and is an affair of such importance that, if brought to a successful termination, it is of itself sufficient to tranquillize our

(a) Ecclesiastes xii. 13.

soul, and to satiate its desires. For, if we attain this one end, and bring this one affair to a happy conclusion, we shall be perfectly contented, even though we should forfeit or neglect all things else. But, if, on the other hand, we fail in attaining this one end, or if we conduct this one affair unsuccessfully, we shall always be uneasy and disturbed, even though we possessed all other things in abundance, and were to bestow upon them our undivided attention. Our desires continually tend with an uncontrollable force towards things greater than those of earth : for as a stone does not find its resting place until it has reached its centre, so man never enjoys perfect repose until he has found God, who is his last end.

4. To serve God is man's end, and his *most important* business upon earth ; because from it depends an eternity of happiness or of misery ; because, should it terminate badly, it would involve an irreparable loss ; and because to have once erred in the management of this business is to have perished for ever. This is that affair which alone will cause us anxiety at the hour of death. In a word, to serve God is man's end, and his greatest, his last, his only, and his essential business in this world. Therefore, he ought to attend to it with all his powers, and with unflagging perseverance. *Man has been created by God, and for God ; therefore he ought to serve God.* Such is the incontestable fact : therefore, you too, reader, are bound to serve God. Let the world prate as it may, let the flesh rebel, let the devil fret and rave, but you are bound to serve God. Every tongue in heaven, upon earth, and in hell proclaims this truth.

THIRD POINT.

We must serve God in that manner in which He wishes to be served. Why do you hesitate? What doubts do you entertain on the subject? The farmer does not permit his servants to work in a manner different from that which he has marked out for them. Why, then, should God alone be compelled to tolerate similar conduct? No one rewards a service which has been performed contrary to orders. Why, then, should God reward such services? Even acts of kindness cease to please, when they are not done in conformity with our desires. How much more displeasing, then, services which are our due? The very holiest works become empty and valueless when not performed agreeably to the Divine wishes. "I have no pleasure in you" (a), said the Lord to the Israelites. And why? because "in the days of your fast your own will is found" (b). Their actions were the result of caprice, and not of a desire to do God's will, and the Lord, in consequence, abominated their sacrifices.

From this we perceive, even with the unaided light of natural reason, that it is our duty to serve our Creator, not in whatever manner we ourselves choose to do so, but in that manner which is pleasing to Him. Let us ponder well on this fundamental truth, and let it be deeply graven on our hearts. If, then, the all-wise God desires that you should serve Him in a humble and despised condition, surrounded by sickness, calamities, and perse-

(a) Malach i. 10.

(b) Isaias lviii. 3.

cution, you are an impious rebel if you would prefer to serve Him in the enjoyment of affluence, health, prosperity, and honours. Hence, you should regard with absolute *indifference every kind of service* which your Creator may be pleased to require at your hands, being prepared to serve Him in every condition of life, or in every degree of perfection that is pleasing to Him in that state which you have already chosen. *This indifference, reduced to practice*, is the principal fruit which you ought use every endeavour to gather from the present meditation. You will be much assisted in your effort to do so : 1, by conceiving in your intellect a lively and clear appreciation of the following truth : “ *I have been created by God and for God ;* 2, by bringing your will to form a firm and efficacious *general resolution of serving God henceforward after whatever manner He may wish*, and may be pleased to make known to you during the course of these exercises.

AFFECTIONS.

You should excite within your soul the following affections principally.

1. *An act of Faith*, by which you firmly believe that to serve your Creator is your *last end*, as well as your only, your greatest, and your *most essential business* ; and that all created things are but *means* ordained for the attainment of this end.

2. *Acts of indifference* in respect of those four conditions of things enumerated by S. Ignatius in his meditation on the “Foundation,” viz. : 1, To serve God whether in honour or dishonour ; 2, whether attended by misery, or surrounded by the

comforts of life ; 3, whether in health, or in sickness ; 4, whether the term of your life be long, or prematurely shortened by labours ; proclaiming yourself ready, moreover (N. B.), *to avoid or reject* that which constitutes the chief impediment to the attainment of your last end, and to *endure or perform* everything which conduces to lead you securely to that great goal—ready, in one word, to spring forward towards *that degree of perfection*, which it is God's wish you should strain every nerve to reach during the present course of Exercises.

You will be much assisted towards attaining this disposition of soul by a practical faith in the following gospel truths : 1. "It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire" (a). 2. "It is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body be cast into hell" (b). 3. Finally, "*What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul ? What exchange shall a man give for his soul ?*" (c) In a word, what will riches, honours, and a life of worldly happiness *profit me* if I lose my soul ? And *how do I suffer* by leading a poor, miserable, and despised existence here, if I only secure my salvation ? Imprint well upon your mind those words : "*what doth it profit ?*" "*how do I suffer ?*"

3. You may also excite within yourself affections : 1. *Of gratitude* for the benefit of creation ; 2. *Of sorrow* for having so often abused the means of sal-

(a) Matthew xviii. 19.

(b) Matthew v. 9.

(c) Matthew xvi. 26.

vation, by making bad use of your senses and of the faculties of your soul; 3. *Of love* towards so beneficent a Creator, resolving firmly to act always, and in all things, with a pure intention; 4. *Of hope* and *of desire* to enjoy eternally God who is our last end.

Nevertheless (as the Directory observes), one ought to indulge in these four affections only for a brief period, and in a passing way. For, the object to which this meditation is directed, and the essential fruit to be gathered from it, is simply a thorough *indifference* to any manner of service which God may require at our hands.

Hence, you ought to employ the greater part of this hour in striving, with all your soul, to acquire this spirit of *indifference*. But if you do not find your soul equal to such perfection, conceive at least a desire of it, and fervently beseech the Lord to grant it to you. Take care, however, not to be discouraged by the difficulty of the attempt; for if God, for His own most wise ends, should deny you this grace at present, perhaps He will grant it to you the more abundantly hereafter. For the rest, be careful on your part to place no obstacle in its way, and endeavour to render yourself worthy to obtain it.

COMPENDIUM.

1. *You have been created by God.* Now, reflect *who* it is that has created you, *whence* He has drawn you, *what* it is He has made you, and with *what* love He has called you into existence. Who? God—God Himself created you. *Whence* has He drawn you? From nothing: employing for that

purpose all His omnipotence. *What* has He made you? A being after His own image and likeness. *With what love* was He influenced? With an infinite and eternal love; loving you from eternity with His entire heart, in preference to innumerable other creatures whose creation was equally possible to Him. What consequence, then, should you draw from all this? It is this—Therefore, *you are bound to serve God with your entire soul, and you ought to employ in His service all those gifts with which He has endowed you.*

2. *You have been created by God to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, in order to enjoy Him afterwards in the life to come.* Hence, to serve God is your *essential* end: since it is for this purpose that God has created you, and not that your life should be passed in the enjoyment of riches, pleasures, and honours; 2. To serve God is your *only end*. You may have achieved wonders upon earth, but if you have failed to labour for God what does it all avail you? Nothing! 3. To serve God is your *last* end, and for this reason your soul is ever restless until it comes to possess Him; 4. To serve God is your chief and *greatest* end, because upon your doing so depends for you an eternity of happiness or of misery.

3. *You must serve God in whatever manner is pleasing to Him:* since no one values services rendered to him against his will. Therefore, in serving God, you ought to regard indifferently whether you do so in riches or in poverty; amid pleasures, or in afflictions; surrounded by honours, or sunk in abasement; during a short life, or a long one; in that state of life to which He may call you, or, in

the state already chosen, in that degree of perfection in which it is His will that you should serve Him.

LECTURE.

*On the First Meditation which S. Ignatius calls
“The Foundation”.*

§ I.

It was not without the assistance of the Divine light that S. Ignatius commenced his Exercises with the consideration of the last end for which we have been created. For, 1. in every undertaking the mind naturally reverts, in the first place, to the end for which we act; this being, as it were, the centre towards which everything else is directed. S. Ignatius, therefore, wishing, by means of his Exercises, to reform the lives of men, wisely commences by proposing for their consideration the end of man; since, not only is the reformation of our life directed towards this, but even the very method of working out this reformation ought to be regulated with a view to it. 2. Moreover, the object of these exercises is to conduct the soul, through the threefold way of perfection, to the attainment of its last end. Now, this cannot be accomplished if the soul have not first discovered what her last end is: therefore, this is very wisely made known to her from the start; 3. Finally, before proceeding to erect a building of any kind, we must first lay the foundation, and for this reason, S. Ignatius very properly places before the other meditations this one which he calls “The Foundation”. “Since” (as the Directory says), “it is the basis of the Spiritual Edifice. And as the foundation supports the entire building, so the influence of this truth is felt throughout all the Exercises, and

more particularly in what concerns the choice of a state (or of a more perfect life), as this election almost entirely depends upon it" (a). For since a true emendation of life consists in *electing* to serve God in whatever manner is most pleasing to Him, we can never succeed in accomplishing this properly, unless our minds are so evenly balanced as to be generously prepared for any sacrifice. This "equilibrium" of mind (if we may so speak) is the fruit which we should principally gather from the present meditation. Hence, we see with what justice it is said *to influence all the exercises, and how it constitutes the foundation of the entire spiritual edifice*: nay more, how it is an indispensable condition required in order to derive the desired advantages from the Retreat.

2. "Wherefore" (to use the words of the Directory), "by how much the more successfully we make this meditation, by so much the greater advantage shall we derive from the others that are to follow; and the deeper we dig this foundation, the more solid will be the superstructure which we shall raise upon it" (b). What attention, then, and what earnestness ought we not employ, in order to meditate this truth with fervour! The devil, who well knows how great will be his own loss and our gain if we meditate upon it thoroughly, employs all his powers to distract us, or induce us to read it over hurriedly, as a truth already sufficiently clear, and in fact self-evident. Meanwhile, he suggests to us the desire of making amends for this by redoubling our fervour on the morrow, and all this time he

(a) Chap. xii., n. 1 & 7.

(b) Chap. xii., n. 3 & 7.

is undermining the foundation stone of our spiritual edifice.

To counteract the effects of this deception, S. Ignatius does not assign any fixed time for this meditation, nor does he limit its duration, as in the case of the others, to one hour, thus giving us to understand that we should occupy ourselves with it so long as is necessary to imprint deeply in our souls the truth which it conveys (*a*). For the same reason, and in conformity with the intention of the saint, I also direct, that it be repeated in the evening, either to compensate for any want of fervour there may have been in the morning, or to increase it.

§ II.

1. When we meditate upon the end of man, two points demand our most serious consideration. 1. "Man has been created by God for the purpose of praising, worshipping and serving his Creator, that he may finally enjoy Him. 2. All other things on earth have been created for man's use, that they may assist him in accomplishing the end for which he has himself been created" (*b*).

As man, then, has been created for God, so all other things have been created for man; and therefore, as God is the end of man, so everything else that exists in the world finds the end of its creation in man. The subject of the first meditation was, that to serve God constitutes our essential, our only

(*a*) Directory, ch. xii. n. 6.

(*b*) In lib. Exercit. de Fundamento.

and our greatest end : the subject of the second will be, that all other created things are merely *means* to help us in working out this end.

From these two truths, S. Ignatius draws two logical consequences of the very greatest importance. The first is : " Therefore, we are bound to make use of, or abstain from, created things in proportion as they prove a help or a hindrance to us in the attainment of our end ". The second is as follows : " Therefore, we ought to hold ourselves indifferent with regard to all created things, and select and desire such only of them as serve to conduct us *most securely* to our last end. In such manner, that we no longer prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to disgrace, nor a long life to a short one " (a). The first of these propositions declares the *use* of created things ; the second regulates the *disposition* of the soul with regard to them. Both combined contain within them the *secret* by which we may most securely and speedily attain greater perfection.

Oh ! words, then, replete with heavenly wisdom ! Martin Olave, that shining light of the Sorbonne, frankly confessed that in a single hour employed in meditating on " the foundation," he had learned more than he had from all the speculative theology which he had been studying day and night for so many years.

There lived in the convent of " Torre di Speechi, at Rome, a nun named Bonaventure—a lady of noble lineage and of keen intellect, skilled in mathematics, and endowed with every gift of nature, but so entirely given up to vanity and the spirit of the world,

(a) In lib. Exercit. de Fundamento.

that she retained nothing of the nun beyond the dress and the name. When the venerable Father Lanciscius was on one occasion invited to conduct the Exercises in this convent, she was at first unwilling to listen to him on any account ; but at length, overcome by the entreaties of her sisters, she very reluctantly came to the chapel. No sooner had she heard the meditation on the end of man, and reflected upon it attentively, than entering her cell, she broke and cast out of it every vain and wordly object which it contained ; she severed all particular friendships, and ceased to indulge in useless conversations and arguments, offering herself to her Creator without reserve as indifferent to everything, and in particular with regard to the attainment of that degree of perfection to which He had called her. "Father!" she said to Lanciscius, "Father! I must no longer trifle with God. I have discovered what it is that God requires of me, and what it is He desires I should not do. I wish to belong entirely to God, and for His greater glory to strive with all my soul to become a saint—but to become a saint *at once*, and a *great saint*." And she kept her word ; for, during the few remaining months of her life, she emulated the sanctity of S. Catherine of Sienna (*a*). Such a change can the meditation of this great truth effect even in the heart of a worldling !

2. Nor need this surprise us ; for, once our intellect has clearly realised the fact that we have not been placed in this world to enjoy its riches, honours, and pleasures, but that these things, on the contrary, have been created to enable us to work out

(a) Lanciscius Opusc. cap vi. 22.

our salvation, by making proper use of, or by despising them ; it is certain that our will must of necessity become indifferent to all created things, selecting and desiring such of them only as help towards the attainment of our last end.

And this harmonizes perfectly with the dictates of reason : for the means, considered merely as means, possess no excellence beyond their aptitude to conduct us to a certain end. Hence, they are to be sought after only in proportion to the help they supply towards the attainment of that end. Therefore, since worldly glory, riches, pleasures, health, and a long life are nothing more than means ordained by God to aid us in working out our salvation, it follows that they are to be regarded as blessings and legitimate objects of our desires, then, only, when they are conducive to our salvation ; and that they are evils to be held in utter abhorrence, whenever they are an obstacle to us in the attainment of our last end. It is our duty, then, to hold ourselves in a state of absolute indifference with regard to them.

The artisan regards with indifference the tools in his workshop. He takes into consideration not so much the materials of which they are made, as their usefulness, and he makes use of them or casts them aside, just as he finds them suitable or otherwise for the purposes of his trade. The person who should think it beneath him to write with an ordinary pen, and would employ in its stead a golden sceptre would be justly held up to ridicule. But that man acts in an equally absurd manner, who when called by God to work out his salvation in poverty, humiliation, and trials, seeks to attain it by a life spent in the enjoyment of luxuries, riches, and honours.

3. And, in truth, what does it avail me to have lived in health, in happiness, and in the enjoyment of honours, if after all I be lost? and how am I injured by having lived in poverty, amid humiliations, and in sickness, if, even so, I save my soul? What loss is it now to Lazarus, that, poor, and covered with ulcers, he once lay like a dog at the threshold of the rich glutton? and of what present advantage is it to the glutton that, during his lifetime, he wallowed in riches and in pleasures? "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell" (a).

That this truth may sink the more deeply into your soul, approach, reader, to the mouth of hell, unbar those dreadful gates, and cry out to those within, "O you lost souls, of what advantage to you were the goods of the world? *What hath pride profited you? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought you?* (b) Come! tell me of what profit was it? what advantage has it brought you?"

Ah! with loud groans, and with gnashing of teeth, they reply, "*We have wandered from the path of truth.* Fools that we were, we have strayed away from our end." "Ah! exclaims the sensual man, "*I did but taste a little honey!*" (c) That sensual pleasure lasted but a brief moment, and these torments will be eternal." The avaricious man cries out, "*I had much goods laid up for many years*" (d), and here I die of hunger". "Oh!" exclaims the proud man,

(a) Luke xvi. 22 and 25.

(b) Wisdom v. 8.

(c) 1 Kings xiv. 43.

(d) Luke xii. 19.

“with what shame am I now covered here, *who was clothed in purple and fine linen*” (a).

Such are the answers you receive from those damned souls, who placed their *last end* in the means which had been ordained merely for its attainment; and constituted their happiness in the enjoyment of those things which they ought only to have used.

On the other hand, turn your eyes towards heaven; cast a glance into Paradise. Tell me what injury is it now to those blessed souls “*to have entered through many tribulations into the kingdom of God?*” (b) Oh! what delight, what overflowing happiness do they not now enjoy, because, during their pilgrimage here below, they had been “*in want, distressed, afflicted!*” (c) because *they were made as the refuse of this world, the off-scouring of all*” (d). Now do they cry out: Oh, sweet sufferings! oh, pleasant tribulations! oh friendly trials! You have been to us so many ladders, by means of which we have reached these heavenly thrones. What answer do you give to these voices from the world beyond the grave? What at this moment is the actual disposition of your soul? Come, tell me, is it not better to reach heaven poor, despised, and afflicted, than to be hurled into hell after a life spent in the enjoyment of riches, honours, and happiness? For, what advantage is it to you to possess every earthly good in abundance, if in the end you are lost? and what injury is it to you to be afflicted with every temporal calamity, if by such means you save your soul? O words! brief

(a) Luke xvi. 19.
(c) Hebrews xi. 36.

(b) Acts xiv. 21.
(d) Cor. iv. 13.

indeed, but pregnant with deepest meaning. *What doth it profit? What loss is it?*

No sooner had S. Francis Xavier meditated on these words than he said within himself, "*What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*" (a) and, on the other hand, what injury is it to a man to lose every earthly possession, if thus he may win heaven?" Overcome by such reflections, he generously spurned from him the pride of human greatness, turned his back upon the world, and consecrated himself without reserve to the service of God. So that to this first meditation on "the foundation," the society of Jesus is indebted for reckoning Xavier among its children, to it Xavier himself owes his sanctity, and India her conversion to the true faith. And in truth, the man who is not moved by this consideration to detach himself from, and become indifferent to, the perishable goods of earth, must have at once a darkened intellect, and a cold and hardened heart.

IV. Should you, too, unfortunately, belong to this class, form a desire at least, of this holy indifference. and treasure up in your memory those two conclusions drawn up by S. Ignatius, viz.:—1. "That we must make use of created things, or abstain from the use of them, precisely in proportion as they are a help or a hindrance to us in the attainment of our last end." 2. That in order to reduce this to practice, "we ought to regard all created things with a feeling of indifference, and to make choice of and desire those only among them which serve *best* to conduct us *to our last end*: in such manner as not

to prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to disgrace, or a long life to a short one" (a).

Frequently turn over these considerations in your mind, and, at the same time, reflect on the happiness and nobility of that soul which is equally prepared to live in a humble, poor, and afflicted condition, or amid pleasures, riches and honours, according as it shall please God to make known His will to her in the course of these exercises.

In point of fact, the attainment of this state of indifference ought to be the fruit of the first meditation. For, *since we have been created by God and for God, we are bound to serve God, and to do so precisely in that manner which He may wish*, being absolutely indifferent to every kind of service to which His Divine Majesty may be pleased to call us ; so that we would esteem it one and the same thing to be rich or poor, honoured or despised, sick or in good health, living or in our graves, provided that, in any of these conditions, we are thus serving our Creator after the manner which is agreeable to Him.

§ III.

1. There are two reasons why S. Ignatius mentions by name these four states of earthly existence, viz. ; 1, poverty or riches ; 2, honour and disgrace ; 3, health and sickness ; 4, a long life and a short one. The first reason is, because it is principally on account of these things that the soul is drawn away from this happy state of indifference, and led towards evil. The second reason is, that all the other obstacles which impede us in the attainment of our last end may be referred to these four,

(a) 1 John ii. 16.

since S. John assures us that "*all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*" (a).

Do not advance in reply that, since *health* and *life* are in themselves two blessings in the order of nature, they may lawfully be coveted, nay more, ought to be jealously guarded; so that one may not be indifferent when there is question of them. For, the illustrious Suarez answers, that, although they are goods suitable to our nature, and, as such, legitimate objects of our desires and solicitude, nevertheless, as they ordinarily furnish an occasion of sin to man, or prove an obstacle to his advancement in virtue, it is most expedient to desire them only in so far as they are a help to our greater perfection. Moreover, as we are sometimes called upon to make light of them, and sacrifice them to God, either as a tribute to virtue, or for our greater perfection, we surely ought to extend to them also the feeling of indifference, in order that we may be ever ready to make this sacrifice when occasion requires. (b).

2. For the rest, since God has, by the grace of vocation, already made clearly known to Religious the state of life in which He wishes to be served by them, they ought to be no longer indifferent concerning this matter; nay more, they ought to fly from every doubt on the subject as from a most horrible temptation. Having established, then, the fundamental point, that God wishes to be served by us in the holy order to which we belong, we ought to be *indifferent* only with regard to the *manner* of

(a) 1 John ii. 16.

(b) De Religione, tom iv. tract 10, lib. 9, cap. 5, dub. 4.

serving God in it, according to the measure of the grace which He has bestowed upon us.

Moreover, since by reason of the condition of our state, we can no longer be indifferent to poverty, or riches, or worldly dignities, inasmuch as we are already bound by our vows to shun them, it remains for us to exercise the spirit of indifference in respect of other objects, viz.—1, Being indifferent to high or low offices in our order (*a*); to being assistants or professed religious; to being employed in teaching the higher and lower classes. 2, Being indifferent to a rich or a poor college; to a commodious or incommodious dwelling; to being governed by gentle or by harsh superiors; to living with lovable or with disagreeable companions. 3, Being indifferent to health or sickness; being able to put up with whatever duties may be assigned to us; with our food, with our apartments, with unwholesome air, and such like matters. 4, Being indifferent whether we live a long life, and whether we shorten it by the discharge of the duties imposed upon us by obedience, by labours, by annoyances, and by wearisome journeys. But if, owing to the peculiarity of the circumstances in which he is placed, any one should find these four points ill-suited to his condition, let him offer himself up as prepared with perfect *indifference to avoid or to embrace, to suffer or to execute* whatever he shall feel that God requires of him during the course of these exercises—placing no limit to the Divine inspirations, admitting no compromise

(*a*) From expressions used here, and, occasionally, elsewhere throughout this book, it is evident that Father Bellicio wrote primarily for the members of the Society of Jesus, to which he himself belonged.—(*Translator.*)

between nature and grace, marking out no halting-place in the path of virtue, but rather generously offering himself as prepared for *any* lot which his Creator may wish to assign him ; ready, in one word, *to mount up to that degree of perfection which God wishes him to attain during the course of these exercises.*

Wherefore, for the sake of brevity, I have reduced the four first points of S. Ignatius to the three following, viz.—1, that we should be indifferent to every kind of *employment* ; 2, to every *place* ; 3, to every *condition of health* ; adding, as a fourth point, indifference to attain, in the state already chosen, *whatever degree of perfection* God may wish us to reach, or a certain promptitude *to avoid* or *to embrace, to suffer, or to perform* everything which God shall require of us in the course of these exercises. Henceforward, adding this point to the other three, I shall call it by the name of *degree*. I do not deny that the attainment of this state of indifference is, in practice extremely difficult ; but I assert that for this very reason the attempt is worthy the ambition of every magnanimous soul ; and I add, moreover, that it is your duty to spare no effort towards attaining this state, if you wish to become a perfect religious—a truth of which you will be convinced after you shall have made attentively the following meditation, which has for its subject “ *The end of the Religious Man* ”.

TO THE READER.

Seculars may substitute for the following meditation the second paragraph of the preceding Lecture, as far as section III. Secular priests, who, in virtue of their

vocation, are bound to aim at their own individual perfection, and to procure the salvation of their neighbour, will find the second meditation much more necessary for them than it may at first sight appear ; nor need they change anything in it beyond a few circumstances.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the End of the Religious Man.

FIRST POINT.

The end of the Religious man, whose life is of a mixed kind, consists not only in attending, with the assistance of Divine grace, to his own perfection and the salvation of his own soul, but also in his using every endeavour to procure the perfection and salvation of his neighbour. Hence the end proposed to the members of the Society (of Jesus) is the perfection and salvation of themselves and of others. The excellence, the utility, and the happiness of this end are exceeding great.

I. *Its excellence* is seen in this :—1. That it was the principal end of the external manifestations of God's power and goodness, or, as theologians say, of the actions of God *ad extra*—that is, of the Creation, of the Redemption, of the Mission of the Holy Ghost, of the life, the labours, and the death of Jesus Christ—these having been directed principally to the perfection and salvation of the human race. 2. Because,

as S. Dionysius attests, to co-operate with heaven in the salvation of souls is the most divine of all divine works—*divinorum omnium divinissimum opus est.*

3. Because he who is zealous for his neighbour's salvation nobly lifts himself above the earth, becomes superior to the very angels, is constituted a mediator between man and God, and in a certain sense, as it were, another redeemer.

II. *The advantages* which flow from the pursuit of this end are also of the highest value: 1. Because of the many merits which we acquire thereby. 2. Because of the innumerable graces which are conferred upon us on account of it. 3. Because of the sublime reward which will crown our labours. For, assuredly, there is nothing better calculated to appease the Divine Justice, than to present before the throne of Divine Mercy the souls that have been saved through our means.

III. Nor is *the happiness* which flows therefrom of less account. For they only who attend to perfection, 1. Live tranquilly; 2. Die calmly; 3. And enjoy copiously the consolations of heaven. Oh! a thousand times blessed, then, be the Lord, "by whom we are called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (a), in which, by reason of our vocation, we are bound to attend to this sublime, this advantageous, and this happy end.

It must be borne in mind, nevertheless, that we are to labour for the attainment of this end, namely, our own and our neighbour's salvation—not according to the individual wish of each one of us, but after the manner which God shall appoint; that is, by

(a) 1 Cor. i. 9.

those means, and in *that measure*, by which, and in which, His Divine Majesty may wish us to attain it. Wherefore, we ought not to strive after any degree of perfection different from that which God wills, nor ought we aim at attaining it by any other means than those which the Lord has appointed for us. Neither ought we to desire to save *other souls*, nor in *greater numbers*, nor in other places, nor at other times, nor by other means than it shall please God. Otherwise, we shall be seeking not God's will but our own. The will of God ought to be the only goal of our actions, and the limit of our desires. Outside of it there exists nothing save error and ruin.

Wherefore, let each one of us imprint deeply in his soul this fundamental truth—that the end of a religious who professes a mixed life, and more particularly of a religious belonging to the Society of Jesus, consists in serving his Creator by procuring his own salvation and perfection, and the salvation and perfection of his neighbour; and in doing this expressly *by those means*, and precisely *in that measure*, by which and in which God wishes him to execute this design. O Jesus! who by word and example didst teach this doctrine, grant that my will may embrace what my judgment approves.

SECOND POINT.

In addition to the frequentation of the sacraments, the exercise of prayer, the practice of retirement, the mortification of the senses and of the passions, and the observance of the rules, the means to attain this end in a mixed order are to be found in the various *places* in which we may be located, in the

various *degrees*, in our different *offices*, and in the various *powers* of our soul and body ; because it is precisely by means of such things that the religious who leads a mixed life procures the salvation and perfection of himself and others.

Here three things must be borne in mind : 1. That in religion the different degrees, the changes of place, the variety of offices, the fluctuations of health, are simply means to help us in securing our own salvation and that of our neighbour ; and, therefore, that we should covet or avoid them, in proportion as they conduct us towards, or lead us away from, this end ; for the means, considered merely as means, possess no merit beyond their adaptability to the attainment of the end. Whoever, then, would desire any of these things, not because of this property annexed to it, but because of its own intrinsic merits, disturbs the natural order by making *the means the end* of his actions.

We must bear in mind, 2. in the next place, that every degree, every locality, every office, every condition of health is for a religious a means suitable to the attainment of his end, since to obtain his own and his neighbour's salvation he can fulfil God's will equally in any degree, in any place, in any office, and in any condition of health. For (as we clearly see both from the nature of the thing itself, and from examples), it is possible to arrive at perfection, and to work out our own and our neighbour's salvation in one degree as well as in another, in a rich convent or in a poor one, whether engaged in teaching or in more active duties, whether our pupils be little children or persons already far advanced in their studies, whether the state of our health be infirm or

robust. Therefore, all these are *suitable* means for the attainment of the end towards which we aim. But, you will say, nevertheless, one means is more suitable than another. No, you deceive yourself. No one of these means is *in itself* more suitable than another for the attainment of this end: it is merely its greater convenience that commends it to your self-love.

Hence, you must remember, 3. in the third place, that of the means mentioned, that one which is in conformity with God's will is the *best adapted* to attain the proposed end: that is to say, that place, that degree, that office, that state of health which God shall have appointed for you, either through His own immediate action, or by the arrangements of your superiors, is for you the one best suited to the service of God, and for the working out of your own and your neighbour's perfection and salvation. Heaven will bestow upon you the graces necessary to attain your end, more copiously and more readily in this state, than in another selected according to the dictates of your own caprice.

Wherefore, those insults and those tribulations, those vexations and annoying dispositions of superiors, and such like matters, are *means*—nay, the *very best means*—thought of, selected and weighed in God's balance from eternity, and by His infinite love proportioned to our strength, that we may succeed in attaining our end.

For, it is certain that the Providence of God, because of God's infinite wisdom, always selects suitable, and even the most suitable, means for the accomplishment of an end. When it is His wish, therefore, that we should procure our own and our

neighbour's salvation by the means already mentioned, it is evident that of all possible means these are the very best to attain that end. O Omnipotent Lord ! do Thou bend our intellects to assent firmly to these truths, and afterwards lead our rebellious wills to co-operate in constantly reducing them to practice.

THIRD POINT.

From what has been said up to the present, we legitimately conclude that every religious ought to serve God in the religious state, in that degree, in that office, in that place, and in that condition of health, in which Divine Providence—or Obedience, the interpreter of His will—shall prescribe. Wherefore, it follows that we ought to be indifferent to every degree, to every office, to every place, to every condition of health, because (as has been already established in the First Meditation) we are bound to serve our Creator *in that manner* which He has appointed to us.

Now, it is God's will that we should serve Him in that place, in that degree, in that office which the Obedience which we owe to our superiors has marked out for us, and in that condition of health which His Providence has been pleased to bestow upon us ; for it is a dogma of Faith that whatever happens, sin alone excepted, happens by the disposition of Divine Providence. So also it is certain, that in doing the will of our superiors we are doing the will of God, who has said, *he that heareth you heareth me*" (a) ; and thus by means of the rule "*we are happy*,

(a) Luke x. 16.

because the things that are pleasing to God are made known to us" (a).

Therefore we ought to be indifferent with regard to all these things, and whosoever is not indifferent fails to serve God in the manner which God requires, and so turns aside from his last end. For as that general indifference to every condition of life—exalted or lowly, rich or poor—is necessary for attaining the end *of man*, as we have seen in the first meditation; so this special indifference to every degree, to every office, to every place, and to every condition of health, is necessary in order to attain the end of *the religious man*—particularly in the Society (of Jesus)—and as that secular would stray away from his end, who should wish to live in a state different from that to which his Creator calls him, so that religious would fail in attaining his end, who should determine to serve God in another condition of health, in another degree, in another office, or in a place different from that in which obedience, or Divine Providence has placed him. Wherefore, let this indifference of feeling in respect of every degree, office, place, and condition of health be the object intended as the special fruit of this meditation.

And, assuredly, this indifference is a matter of the very greatest importance, and a prize which we should strive for at any cost. For it constitutes the foundation of all the other meditations, and if it be undermined, it will drag down with it the entire spiritual edifice of the Exercises, and will entail the ruin of the interior man; since without this a religious can never attain *the highest degree of perfection*,

which is the primary object of the Exercises, and of the religious life.

AFFECTIONS.

You shall stir up within your heart the following affections: 1. *Acts of thanksgiving* for the grace of a religious vocation, which has been bestowed upon you in preference to so many others who were much more deserving of it, notwithstanding the foreknowledge of your sins and to a religious order distinguished by so many choice prerogatives. 2. *Acts of sorrow* for non-observance of the rules, for violations of your vows, for your carelessness in striving after perfection—in one word, for having failed in fulfilling the obligations of so holy a state, and for having been so lukewarm in labouring for the salvation of your neighbour. 3. *Acts of love and of praise* of God's admirable Providence, which has guided you so lovingly—even sometimes in opposition to your own inclinations—through so many dangers, and by so many different paths, and has ensured, at length, your safety in the harbour of religion. 4. Finally, *resolve* to serve God henceforward, in whatever manner He may wish: namely, in that degree of virtue which He shall be pleased to make known to you during these Exercises. Nevertheless, for the reasons already mentioned, we must not occupy ourselves beyond a brief period, with these four affections; we must, instead, concentrate all the powers of our soul in eliciting—

II. *An act of indifference* to every place, to every office, to every degree, to every condition of health. This we must do, however, merely *in a general way*, being cautious not to enter too minutely to-day into

particulars where there is question of a matter so difficult in itself, and so utterly at variance with our self-love. For, our will being still weak, we must advance by slow stages, until it becomes gradually stronger through the graces obtained during the progress of the Exercises, and arms itself to face each difficulty *in particular*.

III. A considerable portion of time should also be devoted to eliciting *an act of Faith*, in virtue of which we firmly believe that all things happening to us through the commands of our superiors or otherwise, are sent to us by God for our greater good, and that they are, consequently, the means best adapted to conduct us to our end. For that self-same God who said, "*This is my Body*" (a), has said also, "*he that heareth you, heareth me*" (b). If then we believe in the truth of the first of these sayings, why should we entertain doubts concerning the truth of the second?

Let us also believe with a most firm faith the following dogmas—That God is *omniscient*, from which it follows that He *knows* what place, what degree, what condition of health, and what office is most suitable for us. 2. That God is *omnipotent*, and is, therefore, *able* to use that which suits us best. 3. Finally, that God burns with an *infinite love* for us, and will, consequently, bestow upon us the means which are best adapted to the attainment of the end to which He has called us. A lively faith in this truth cannot fail to produce in us the spirit of indifference already mentioned, provided we implore it of God by fervent prayer.

(a) Matt. xxvi. 26.

(b) Luke x. 16.

COMPENDIUM.

I. The *end* of the religious who professes a mixed life is to attend to his own perfection and salvation, and to that of his neighbour. *The excellence, the utility,* and the *happiness* of this end are exceeding great.

1. Its *excellence* is great, because all the operations of God, *ad extra*, were directed to this end, and in having it as our end also, we are in a measure made co-redeemers of men. 2. Its *utility* is great, because (1) Of the merits ; (2) The graces ; and, (3) The glory which we shall obtain by accomplishing it. 3. Its *happiness* is great, because it conduces (1) To a tranquil and contented life ; and (2) To a happy death. But it should be remembered that we must procure our own and our neighbour's salvation after the *manner* which God shall wish—namely, by *these means*, and in *that measure*, which shall be pleasing to Him.

II. In a mixed order, the principal *means* to attain this end are the various *places, degrees, offices*, and the *powers* of our mind and body ; because it is precisely by such agencies that we attain our own perfection and salvation, and procure the perfection and salvation of others.

Here observe firstly, that the things just mentioned are nothing more than means. Wherefore, since the means have no other excellence beyond their aptitude to assist us in attaining an end, it follows that they are to be sought after, or avoided, in proportion as they conduct us to, or lead as away from, our end.

Observe, secondly, that these various *places, degrees, offices, &c.*, are means suited to the attainment of our end, since by means of them we can fulfil the will of God.

Observe, in the third place, that though all these means are in themselves *suited* to the accomplishment of our end, yet that one among them is *best suited*, which it is God's will we should employ.

III. From all this we conclude, that the religious ought to serve God in his vocation, in that *degree*, in that *office*, in that *place*, and in that condition of *health* which His Divine Providence and Obedience—the interpreter of His wishes—shall direct that He be served ; and that without this *total indifference to every means* we can neither be perfect ourselves, nor promote the perfection of others.

CONSIDERATION.

On indifference to every place, every office, every degree, and every condition of health.

Since the necessity of this indifference is so great, that without it the entire spiritual edifice of the Exercises would go to ruin, in the same manner as a house would fall if its foundation were undermined ; and since, on the other hand, it is a virtue extremely difficult to acquire, as being diametrically opposed to our self-love, I have resolved on putting forward a few arguments to persuade you to it, so that the will, assailed in so many ways, and so powerfully, may at length be forced to yield submission, and confess itself vanquished. This is what I propose to myself

in the present consideration, and in doing so I am but following out the plan of S. Ignatius, who wishes that the entire of the first day should be exclusively devoted to this subject.

I. The first cause which renders this golden indifference so difficult to us is the dread of the labours, the slights, the annoyances, the sickness which must fall to our lot in such a particular place, or office, or degree of virtue, and so render our lives miserable. The removal then of this dread will help also to remove the obstacles which impede us in attaining this indifferenée.

1. To begin, then, with the dread of *sickness* ; tell me, pray, cannot the Lord punish you with sickness in that place also, and in that office which you desire so much ? And is He not able to preserve you in health in that place, and in that office, which you would avoid through fear of illness ? Why do you not fear rather that the vengeance of God would punish your repugnance precisely in this manner ? And, on the other hand, is there not reason to hope that God would reward your indifference by preserving to you your health ? And, finally, if God, the Arbiter of life and death, does wish that you should be ailing rather than in good health, who are you that you should wish to resist His Omnipotence ? Is it not better to be ailing in conformity with God's will, than enjoying good health in opposition to it ? Therefore, the alleged fear of sickness is an extremely weak excuse suggested to you by self-love. Nevertheless, it is not forbidden you to lay before your superiors any well-grounded fear you may have of losing your health, provided you be at the same time prepared

to do afterwards, with a spirit of indifference, what soever they, with a knowledge of the case, shall impose upon you.

2. Next, as regards the labours, the inconveniences, the annoyances, the weariness, the cares, to avoid which you would not wish to be in that place, or in that office, cannot God recompense you abundantly for them by a more sublime gift of prayer, by heavenly consolations, by the happy success of your undertakings, by peace of soul, by purity of heart, and by removing you from greater troubles, afflictions, and calamities which you might have to endure elsewhere?

On the other hand, cannot God, for your punishment, afflict you in that place or in that office which you so eagerly desire, with innumerable trials—and ones much more difficult to bear than those which you would endeavour to escape? . . . Nay, have you not just reason to fear that such trials would befall you? Be wise, then, and repose with indifference in the designs of Divine Providence.

3. Finally, what has been said of labours may be said also of those *insults* which you fear to encounter in any particular place, or office, or degree of virtue. If you endure them in peace, God will reward you with an abundance of graces, with robust health, with tranquillity of soul, and with the sweetness of heavenly consolations. On the other hand, oh! how many have met with nothing but rebuffs and insults in the very place where they had hoped to be crowned with glory! Oh, how odious when elevated to the rank of superiors do they often become, who, had they remained in the position of equals, would have

won the love of every person with whom they might be brought in contact!

Such persons, by a just judgment of God, meet with insults, sickness and labours in that very career in which they had hoped to find ease, honours, and health. Thus Aman, though holding a most honourable position, ended his life on the gibbet (*a*). Thus Lot, who had chosen for his residence the most pleasant *places* in Sodom, would have been destroyed by the fire which rained from heaven, had he not hastened to seek safety in flight (*b*). Thus Ochozias, while impatiently desiring to fly from *sickness*, met death, and was forced to hear from Elias that terrible announcement, "*Thou shalt surely die*" (*c*).

And then, what do you gain? Since even after enduring so many annoyances, and taking so much trouble to withdraw yourself from compliance with what obedience prescribes, it happens, as a general rule, that you must finally yield, and do under compulsion that which you now refuse to do of your own free will. For, whether you wish it or not, the will of God must always accomplish itself. God ordered Jonas to go to Ninive and preach there. Fearing that if God should afterwards pardon that people, he would himself be regarded as a false prophet, Jonas refused the office that had been assigned to him, and fled from that place. But who can escape from the hand of God? He is caught in the midst of the

(*a*) Esther vii. 10.

(*b*) Gen. xix. 24.

(*c*) 4 Kings i. 16.

ocean, is buried in its waters, is swallowed by a fish, and is at length saved only when he has passed through many dangers and trials. What happens next? "*The word of the Lord came to Jonas the second time,*" ordering him to proceed to Ninive. He obeyed; he went: but only after he had encountered many trials, which he would have escaped if he had only obeyed the first command (a).

II. Having removed, then, this chief impediment, let us next consider, for our greater encouragement, *the happiness* which is enjoyed in this world by a soul endowed with the spirit of indifference. While she covets nothing through self-love, and refuses nothing through fear, she enjoys a heavenly peace, precisely because she puts away from her those two passions which are the fount of all uneasiness, namely, a *painful longing* to obtain that which we desire, and the *fear* of losing what we already possess.

He who desires nothing is the richest person upon earth, because he is rich in himself, and is his own absolute master. He is independent of his superiors, because, being indifferent to everything, he seeks favours from no one. He abounds in every consolation, being always certain that he is in that place and in that office in which God wishes him to be, and, hence, in all his difficulties, dangers, and trials, he has recourse to God with entire confidence, being certain of obtaining His assistance. His days are passed in tranquil repose on the bosom of Divine Providence, while he repeats with the prophet, "*The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing*" (b).

(a) Jonas iii. 1, et seq.

(b) Ps. xxii. 1.

Finally, the rival of the angels, he lives a heavenly life, even while he is yet a sojourner upon earth. For, as the angels of the Lord are always prepared "*to hearken to the voice of his orders*" (a), are ready to guard alike a rich or a poor man, a Christian or an unbeliever; are indifferent to offer up in heaven the incense of the prayers of the saints (b), as well as to pour out upon the earth the "seven vials full of the wrath of God" (c); so this happy soul stands ever on the alert to execute, as do the angels, the slightest order of her Creator, which is the only goal of her actions. Hence, no one can fully estimate the happiness which she enjoys here upon earth.

On the other hand, the person who does not possess this beautiful virtue is like a tempest-tossed ocean—ever agitated by a thousand cares, a thousand troubles. He must sacrifice his independence, must humble himself, must become the base flatterer of other men in order that they may favour, or at least, not oppose his ambitious projects. Should adversity come upon him, he dares not, in the fulness of his remorse, to ask assistance from God; because he well knows that he has himself sought from the hands of his superior, through intrigue, that position which now causes him so much trouble. And he knows that for his punishment God turns into bitterness, that for the enjoyment of which he withdrew himself from following the Divine will. Perhaps you have yourself experienced this, . . . and yet you have not learned wisdom?

Imprudent man! do you not fear that, for your

(a) Ps. cii. 20. (b) Apoc. viii. 3. (c) Apoc. xv. 7.

punishment, God may permit that you be more fiercely tried by temptation, and even fall perhaps into mortal sin, in that place which you covet so much, while if you had been elsewhere he would not have permitted you to fall? Do you not fear that in that office which so entices you, God may withhold from you those graces which are specially required to fill it properly? How can you presume to live in that place and in that office in which Divine Providence has not placed you? You are as a bone out of its socket, and your life will be always one of pain. Tell me, pray, what contentment will you derive from having always secured the object of your desires; from having always acted as your own inclinations prompted? Unhappy man! what will this avail you? What reward can you afterwards lay claim to, since you have executed not God's will but your own? Ah! be afraid,—because *maledictus homo qui ponit carnem brachium suum*.

Wherefore, let us renew with a prompt and generous heart that fundamental resolution already so many times repeated to-day, of serving God henceforward in that state of life (or in the state already chosen), in that *degree* of perfection, in that *office*, in that *place*, in that condition of *health*, in which He shall make known to us that He wishes us to serve Him; being firmly fixed in our determination *to avoid* or *to embrace*, *to suffer* or *to perform*, whatever we may discover in the course of these Exercises to be in conformity with the will of our Creator.

III. That this resolution may become still stronger, persuade yourself that it is of Faith that whatever happens in this world is not the result of mere chance, but happens by the disposition of God, who loves

us infinitely, and whose divine wisdom "*ordereth all things sweetly*" (a). Attend to those words, "*all things sweetly*". Wherefore, that place and that office which God has appointed for you by means of your superiors, and this sickness and this trouble with which you may be afflicted, come to you from His paternal hand. In fact it is God—God alone—who wishes that you should be in that place, that you should fill that office, that that sickness should afflict you, that that trouble should come upon you, and that you should make every effort to attain that particular degree of perfection. And yet, you maintain all the while that these things do *not* come to you from God, but from jealous rivals, from disagreeable superiors, from your enemies, from the revengeful feelings and the hatred of others. We will, for a moment ignore the fact that, in your blind judgments, you are perhaps deceiving yourself—nay, that you mostly do deceive yourself. But let us grant, for the sake of argument, that your trials do really come from those sources which you mention. What, then? I willingly allow that your enemies are guilty of grievous sin, and will, in consequence of it, be punished by God. But I affirm and maintain at the same time, that though God does not will sin, He wills its effect. Therefore that place, that office, and those trials which originate in the evil deeds of others, are still the object of the Divine will. Thus, although God detested the sale of Joseph by his brethren, He approved, nevertheless, of his sojourn and employment in Egypt; so that Joseph himself said to his brothers "*God sent me before you into*

Egypt" (a). Remark : he does not say "the jealousy of my brothers," but "*God*". The devil overwhelmed Job with every description of calamity, and Job exclaims, "*the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away*" (b). Observe, "*the Lord*," not the devil. Finally, although God execrated the rage of the Jews, He decreed, nevertheless, the death of His Son ; and Jesus Himself said to Peter, "*The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?*" (c) He does not say "that chalice which the Jews have given me," but "*which my Father hath given me*".

Wherefore, although God condemns the hatred manifested towards you by your companions, the imprudence of your superiors, the envy of your rivals, He wills at the same time that disgrace and those trials which come upon you through these means. Let the world say what it will, let self-love grumble, but, nevertheless, that you should be in that particular place, that you should fill that office, that you should be afflicted with that illness, *is the will of God*.

2. And all this is intended (O holy angels ! adore God's infinite goodness) for your greater advantage, so much so, that if you were enabled to penetrate the secrets of Providence, you would yourself choose these means and no other, and for this reason : God's infinitely perfect mind knows what suits you best, since "*there is nothing hid from his eyes*" (d). Moreover, He is able to give you what suits you best ; because "with God all things are possible".

(a) Gen. xlv. 5.

(b) Job i. 21.

(c) John xviii. 11.

(d) Eccles. xxxix. 24.

Therefore, He will give you that which is most suitable to your condition, for He loves you "*as the apple of his eye*" (a), "*as the nurse her little infant*" (b). Hence, whatsoever befalls you happens for your greater good. So it is; for the Lord has ordered all things "*in measure, and number and weight*" (c), and not only this, but "*with great favour He disposes of us*" (d), "*turning evil into good*" (e), "*making also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it*" (f). Entrust yourself, then, in the spirit of indifference towards every earthly thing, to the loving bosom of Divine Providence. Repose in that bosom, and say with S. Ignatius, "*Domine, fac mecum sicut scis, et vis; nam scio quod amator sis.*"

"All mine is Thine,—say but the word;
 Whate'er Thou wilt shall be done:
 I know Thy love, all-gracious Lord;
 I know it seeks my good alone."

EXAMEN.

On the Impediments to Indifference.

Since (as I have said before), S. Ignatius desires that the entire of this day should be occupied in meditating on "the Foundation," and on *indifference*, which is its natural consequence, I have judged it expedient, in accordance with his advice, to examine particularly the chief obstacles to this heavenly spirit

(a) Deut. xxxii. 10.

(c) Wisdom xi. 21.

(e) Gen. i. 20.

(b) Numbers xi. 1.

(d) Wisdom xii. 13.

(f) 1 Cor. x. 13.

of indifference, so that by removing them we may the more easily acquire this fundamental virtue. Therefore examine yourself diligently to-day on the following points, either during the last quarter of an hour allotted to the consideration, or to the spiritual lecture.

1. What created thing affords you the greatest pleasure? What disorderly affection enslaves you most? What difficulty most inspires you with fear? What is the chief obstacle which hinders you from entering on the path of a more perfect life, and serving God, in the state to which He calls you, after the manner which He requires; or from ascending, in the state which you may have already chosen, to that degree of perfection which it is His wish that you should make every effort to attain?

2. What is it that most powerfully withdraws you from that golden indifference so much inculcated by S. Ignatius? Is it *the concupiscence of the flesh, or the concupiscence of the eyes, or the pride of life*? That is to say, a thirst for honours, a desire of ease and pleasures, or a craving for riches? Or is it an over-due aversion to labours, to sufferings, to slights? Have you conceived a proper appreciation of the necessity and excellence of this holy indifference? Have you at least earnestly desired to acquire it?

3. Are you prompted to desire or to shun any particular place or office, either by your natural pride, or by sensuality, or by a love of superfluities? Does your anxiety for the recovery or preservation of your health, or a dread of impairing it, induce you to choose and seek for, or to fly from that place or that office? Does the fear of shortening your life induce you to abandon this or that labour undertaken for

the good of souls, or to neglect this or the other opportunity of advancing the glory of God?

4. Are you prepared to avoid or to embrace, to endure or to perform whatever you shall discover in the course of these Exercises that God demands of you? or are you, perhaps, placing limits to God's grace, by being obstinately resolved not to advance or be enlightened beyond a certain point?

If you should encounter any difficulty in these different points of Examination, remember that you have been created by God and for God, and that you are, consequently, bound to serve Him in that manner which He shall desire. Then, ask yourself who are you that, turning aside from the only true path of rectitude, you should be unwilling to do that which Almighty God wishes you to do!

N.B.—If you have not read yesterday the counsels to be followed during the time of the Exercises, and which may be found in § IV. of the Introduction (page 17), read them to-day.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Repetition of the Two preceding Meditations.

TO THE READER.

I. There are two reasons why S. Ignatius inculcates so earnestly the necessity of repeating these Fundamental Meditations. Firstly, because by means of

repetition, the truths which they contain become more deeply imprinted upon our understanding. Secondly, because the will, embracing them with repeated efforts, becomes more and more confirmed in its first resolution. In one word, the object of the repetition is to derive from the Meditations that fruit which we fail to gather fully when considering them for the first time.

II. During these repetitions, “in which we ruminate, as it were, what we had previously meditated” (a). two things must be carefully attended to: 1. We should dwell principally on these portions of the past Meditations “which brought us greater light or fervour”: as also on those parts in which we experienced in a large degree consolation, or desolation, or any other movement of the soul. We should also strive to draw some pious feelings from those portions in which our soul languished through spiritual dryness, because it frequently happens that in meditating them anew we are filled with greater light and consolation (b).

2. We ought to occupy ourselves much more in exciting our affections than in the exercise of the reasoning powers, for in this the principal advantage to be derived from the repetition consists. This is the advice given to us by the Directory, which says:—“Avoiding prolonged reflections, we ought in these repetitions merely to propose to ourselves, and touch lightly upon what we have previously meditated; dwelling thereon not so much with the intellect, as

(a) S. Ignatius, in lib. Exercit hebd. 1.

(b) Directory, ch. xv. n. 3.

with the will and affections ; and this is the reason why the holy author introduces colloquies more frequently here than in the preceding exercises" (a).

N.B.—The asterisks (), scattered here and there through the following Meditation, mark the places where one might make a somewhat longer pause than usual, if these passages should have in the preceding Meditations afforded him any light, or excited any feelings of consolation, dryness, sadness, &c.*

FIRST POINT.

Since we have been created by and for God, reason itself clearly points out that we are bound to serve God, and to serve Him in that manner which He may wish ; because no service can be agreeable to Him which is not in accordance with his Divine will.

O Lord God ! Creator of all things, I confess that as a man, as Thy servant, and as a Christian, I am bound to serve Thee, my God, my Lord, and my Redeemer ; and I confess, moreover, that this is the sole, the essential, the last, and the paramount business and end of man.*

But to be bound to do this in that particular manner which is pleasing to you, and to be obliged to hold myself indifferent to all the means through which you have appointed that I should attain my end—this is the difficulty ; this is the critical trial. For "*I will confess against myself my injustice to the*

(a) Directory, ch. xv. n. 2.

Lord" (a); here the flesh with its self-love, and my entire human nature rises up in rebellious opposition. Here there is nothing more enlightened than the intellect, and yet nothing weaker than my will. I am well aware of the happiness this heavenly indifference brings with it; I feel within me the powerful impulses of grace inciting me to adopt its spirit;* but, unhappy being that I am! "*I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind*" (b)* and persuading me to fly from that good which I desire.

I understand the very powerful motives which impel me towards this virtue. For, in the first place, *equity* demands it, since the very husbandman does not permit his dependents to serve him otherwise than he commands, and we ourselves set no value even on favours, if they be not conferred in a manner that is agreeable to us. 2. I perceive too clearly that *my own interests* require this: because, otherwise, all my good works and my labours would fail to bring me merit, for the very reason that they are not in conformity with the will of God. 3. I know, in fine, that even my happiness in this world demands this: because he alone enjoys happiness here below who desires always to execute the will of God.

Ah! I hear resounding in my ears those words of the damned: "*What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us*"? (c) I hear them repeating those terrible truths: What *profit* is it to have abounded in everything, and be

(a) Psalm xxxi. 5.

(b) Romans vii. 23.

(c) Wisdom v. 8.

afterwards lost? What *loss* is it to suffer every temporal affliction, if one saves his soul? That truth is a sharp thorn which pierces my soul;* and yet (O weakness on my part!) I shrink back affrighted from that heavenly indifference, towards which *justice, my own interests, and my own happiness* so strongly impel me. Why dost Thou delay, O Lord? Awaken my torpid soul; "*Show might in thy arm;*" (a) and do Thou, who didst command the winds and the sea (b), bring this rebellious will of mine, also, into submission to Thy divine decrees.

Wherefore, "*hear, O ye heavens,*" the firm resolution which I now solemnly take, "*let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth*" (c). Since Thou art "*my Lord and my God*" (d), I shall, henceforward, devote myself to Thy service, and I shall serve Thee in that manner which pleases Thee best; in whatever state of life Thou shalt determine, or, in my present state, in whatever degree of perfection Thou shalt appoint for me, being prepared to avoid or to embrace, to suffer or to perform whatsoever I shall, during the course of the present exercises, discover to be Thy will. Do Thou, O Lord, who art Omnipotent, stretch forth to me Thy helping hand, because, unaided, I am powerless to advance a single step.

After this, excite within your heart (but with greater fervour) those acts of virtue, and those pious affections which I have already proposed to you in the first meditation.

(a) Luke i. 51. (b) Luke viii. 25.
 (c) Deut. xxxii. 1. (d) John xx. 28.

SECOND POINT.

But, if the end of *Man* renders this indifference on his part necessary, the end of *the religious man* demands it still more imperatively; and we expect to find it in a religious in a far more perfect degree. So it is, O my Lord Jesus Christ, author and exemplar of the apostolic life! The *excellence*, the *utility*, and the *happiness* of my end (which consists in my own perfection and salvation, and in procuring the perfection and salvation of others), will avail me nothing, if I do not follow it out in that manner which you have appointed: that is to say, by those special *means*, and in that precise *measure*, by which, and in which, it is your will that I should attain it.*

Moreover, aided by your divine light, I know clearly that in the religious state every place, every office, every degree, and all conditions of health are *means*, and *suitable means*, to attain this end.* Nay more, since in the infinite wisdom of your providence, you always select those means which are best proportioned to the attainment of the end, I am firmly, persuaded that the place, the office, the degree, and the condition of health in which I may happen to be placed, are the *most suitable* to attain my end. Therefore, I see as clearly as it is possible, that I am bound to hold myself indifferent in regard of all these things.*

And, nevertheless, O Lord! I do not discover in myself this heavenly virtue, nor even the faintest traces of it. The love of ease, of honours, and of pleasures, and the horror of labours, of slights, and

of afflictions hold a tyrannical sway over my heart, and lead me on blindly to think and act merely as they dictate.

But, how long, my soul, wilt thou bear this yoke? And when wilt thou cast it off at once, and for ever? Didst thou renounce worldly dignities, in order, afterwards, in the school of humility, to grasp with avidity at the smoke of honours? Didst thou renounce wealth, worldly prospects, and the comforts of your father's house, that you might afterwards, when in the abode of penance, sigh after a life of ignoble indolence? Didst thou sever the ties of flesh that, afterwards, when dead to the world, your life should be given up to pampering your body, and you should become the slave of silly fears regarding your health?

O Lord, illumine my eyes, that they may see that vanity which blinds my soul, with such thick, and such fatal darkness. Grant me, O Lord, a firm faith in the truth that Thy providence governs all things: that this place and this office have been allotted to me by Thy command; that this illness comes to me from Thy hand.* Grant, moreover, that I may accept all these things from Thee in the spirit of indifference, as being of all others the most suitable for the attainment of my end.

After this, repeat with all the fervour of your soul the same affections which I have already proposed to you in the Second Meditation.

COMPENDIUM.

I. O Lord! I acknowledge that, as a man, I am bound to serve You, and that this is my *sole*, my *essential*, my *last*, and my *greatest* end. But it is

extremely difficult, O Lord, to be obliged to do this precisely in that manner which you wish, that is, with a perfect indifference to riches or to poverty, to pleasure or to sorrow, to honours or to insults, to every state of life, and to every degree of perfection ! And yet, *justice*, my own *interests*, and my own *happiness* demand this of me. To this I am prompted by the very voices of the damned souls, who unceasingly give utterance to this terrible exclamation—*What doth it profit us to have made our end of what was merely the means to its attainment ? What doth it profit us ?*

But, of myself I am powerless : do Thou assist me with Thy grace, while, on my part, I am firmly resolved henceforward to accomplish my end.

II. O my Lord and Creator ! as a religious, *my end* is to labour for my own perfection and salvation, and for that of others, by means of the various degrees, offices, places, &c. But I am convinced that the *excellence*, the *utility*, and the *happiness* of this end will avail me nothing unless I am indifferent to these means ! Do Thou enlighten me ; make me understand how, in themselves, all these means are *suitable* to the attainment of my end, and that those only among them are *more* and *most suitable*, which Thou, through means of my superiors, may prescribe for my use.

TO THE READER.

Since those who have not as yet derived much spiritual profit from the Retreat, ought to occupy themselves, yet awhile, with the Exercises assigned to the first week, both to excite themselves to greater sorrow for their sins, and to realise the more thoroughly their baseness

and deformity (a), the Exercises of the following day are purposely lengthened ; so that, being divided into two parts, they may furnish matter for two days' meditation to those who have resolved to occupy themselves during four days in Exercises of this week. Let such persons, therefore, take for the subject of their reflections to-day half of each of the meditations on Sin and Hell, reserving the other halves for to-morrow. In this manner we shall observe the rule laid down in the Directory, which says : " On the third day shall be proposed for consideration the matter already meditated on the second, but with the addition of some new points ; for thus we penetrate into it more deeply " (b). Those persons, however, who will not occupy themselves beyond three days with the Exercises of the first week, may (if the meditation should seem to them too long) meditate upon one or two points only, and read the remainder, either after prayer, or at whatever other time may be found most convenient.

(a) Directory, ch. xvii. 1.

(b) Ibid. ch. xiv. 1.

Second Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Sin punished in the rebel Angels and in Adam.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER the punishment of the sin committed by the angels, who, through the absence of that spirit of indifference already mentioned, turned away in rebellious pride from the end for which they had been created, refused to serve their Creator in the manner which He wished, and were, in consequence, hurled headlong, with the lightning's speed, into Hell. Here, reflect on the following points.

1. *Who it is* that condemns them to such terrible punishment. *Who?* It is God, whose *justice* cannot permit Him to punish beyond what is deserved; whose *mercy* always inclines Him to punish less than is deserved; whose *wisdom* can appoint nothing without prudence and design; whose *sanctity* can do nothing through passion, or imperfectly. And yet, this God, so just, so holy, so wise, and so merciful, exacted this severe punishment from the heavenly spirits who, by a single sin, departed from their last end.

2. Reflect *who they were* whom He so severely punished. Alas! they were beings of the most sublime intelligence, the princes of the heavenly court, the masterpieces of Divine Omnipotence, distin-

guished by the choicest gifts of nature and of grace, countless in number, and who, had it been permitted to them to do penance, would have for evermore loved their Creator with a most intense and eternal love, and would have expiated their crime by a never-ending and most poignant sorrow.

3. Reflect *why* it was that God, so merciful and so wise, punished such an immense number of noble spirits, and punished them all, without even a solitary exception. *Why?* For one (ah ! be terrified, O ye heavens, and let the earth be shaken with fear to its very foundations), for a single mortal sin : for *one only* their *first* committed in a *single instant* and only in *thought*.

4. Reflect in *what manner* God punished the angels for this one sin. Ah ! He inflicted on them a punishment extreme in its intensity, eternal in its duration ; or (as the schools say) finite in its *intensity*, but, nevertheless, infinite in its *extension*, and of such nature that (taking into account the pain of loss) the avenging Omnipotence of God could inflict no greater.

5. Consider *when* it was that God so punished them. It was at a time when there did not as yet exist any example of punishment to forewarn them : when no admonition, no threat of chastisement, had preceded their crime. They had not seen the earth submerged by the waters of the Deluge, nor Sodom destroyed by the fire which rained from heaven, nor Jesus Christ expiring upon the Cross because of sin. And yet, all of them—not merely one in ten—all of them without exception were precipitated into the abyss, precipitated suddenly, with the rapidity of the lightning's flash, in the very same instant that

they sinned, without being allowed even one brief moment to repent.

Ah! the third part of those noble and countless angelic hosts, who had sinned but once, and that in thought; who had no examples before them to inspire them with terror, and no time given them for repentance—the angels (tremble, sinful man!) for their first and only sin a sin of thought committed in an instant were hurled into *Hell*; that is, into a place of torments, countless in their number, terrible in their intensity, and in their duration eternal. And they were consigned to this dread abode by a Judge of infinite justice, wisdom, sanctity, and mercy. O sin! what a horrible monster, then, and how detestable must thou be: and yet, the blind perversity of man regards thee as a thing of nothing—a mere trifle. Oh, what a terrible evil thou art, deserving to be wept with tears of blood! thou who hast drawn sinners away from their last end—which is the infinite good—into the depths of every misery. Now, tell me, reader, what conclusions do you draw from all this?

First conclusion. Wherefore, sin is to be avoided and detested with a most intense hatred and horror. Perhaps you would call this into question? But “*if God spared not the angels that sinned: but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments*” (a), by what means do you hope to be spared?—you, who are but the slime of the earth; you, who have committed not one sin alone, but so many and such grievous transgressions; and have repeated them after having been so many

times pardoned, and after having witnessed so many examples of punishment, inflicted by the terrible justice of God. Wherefore, moved by a due dread of such punishment, tremble, and "*flee from sins as from the face of a serpent*" (a).

For, that Hell into which the rebel angels were hurled still burns, and burns for you also Yes! for you also. That same God who pardoned not the angels still exists, and is equally just, holy and powerful, now as then. He exists! Ah yes! He does exist, and woe to you should He strike you with death, at a moment when you are in the state of mortal sin. If He pardoned not the angelic spirits, so noble and so numerous, much less will His avenging justice spare you—a vile, worthless worm of the earth. Wherefore be afraid, fly from, and abhor, sin.

Second conclusion. The malice of mortal sin being so great as to provoke the anger of God in such a degree, it follows that we ought to grieve for sin with a most intense sorrow. You have sinned, unhappy wretch! you have sinned: your conscience proclaims this to you in unmistakable accents: therefore, you have merited Hell, as you know from the teachings of faith. If death had surprised you on that day, at that hour, at that moment when you sinned, alas! where would you be at present! Ah! at this very moment you would " *dwell with devouring fire*" (b), and you would have to dwell there for ever.

Here reflect. God punished the angels. He has pardoned you. He "*delivered them, drawn down by*

(a) Ecclesiasticus xxi. 2.

(b) Isaias xxxiii. 14.

infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments," while He has granted to you time for repentance. You sinned once, twice, a third time—and yet God pardoned you. You sinned a fourth time, and the fourth time God pardoned you. You sinned a tenth and a twentieth time, and even the twentieth time God pardoned you. Your life has been one continued sin, and yet God has continued to forgive you. He did not delay one instant in hurling the angels into Hell for all eternity, after their first and only sin, and that a sin but in thought; and in His great patience, He has forgiven you—a miserable, vile, ungrateful creature—hundreds of most heinous crimes.

Do you not, then, recognise at length the infinite goodness of the divine mercy towards you? Are you not lost in amazement, when you consider the immense affection which God has borne towards you in comparison with so many others? Ah! you have not a human heart if at this thought you do not burst forth with sighs and lamentations, if your eyes do not dissolve themselves in floods of tears, and your entire soul melt in the flame of reciprocal love. Wherefore excite within yourself most heartfelt sentiments of *sorrow* and *detestation* for sin; grieving most intensely for *past* sins, and most firmly resolving to avoid all *future* ones. Let *grief* for sins past, and a *horror* of future sins be the fruit you will gather from this meditation.

SECOND POINT.

Consider the punishment inflicted on our *first parents*, because through sin they strayed away from their last end; inasmuch as, through the absence of the spirit of indifference, they did not remain con-

tent with their actual condition, desiring to be "*as gods, knowing good and evil*" (a). They wished, it is true, to serve God, but to do so in a more elevated sphere than He had appointed for them, and to gain which they employed means which had been forbidden them. Scarcely, however, had they tasted the forbidden fruit when—

1. They are instantly stripped of original justice, and of that dominion which they had previously exercised over the brute creation and their own rebellious appetites; and, exiled from Paradise, they are driven out into this vale of tears, without ever a hope of return. Nor did the evil consequences of their great fault end here, but its poison was transmitted, also, to their posterity.

2. That you may realise this the better, represent to yourself all the accumulated miseries that ever have been, or shall be: all the pestilences, famines, conflagrations, shipwrecks, and wars that have ever occurred; all the ruin and devastation of so many cities, provinces, kingdoms, and empires, which are chronicled in the world's history; all the inundations of rivers and seas which have happened from time to time; the sufferings consequent on the winter's colds and the summer heats; all the ailments, the pains and the torments of the countless beings who have ever been tried by sickness, and even of the martyrs themselves; in a word, all the calamities and miseries which, like a deluge, have inundated, still inundate, and shall continue to inundate the earth. Add to this the lot of the many hundreds of millions of children who, by dying without baptism, have

been deprived for ever of the happiness of heaven;—represent to yourself, as I said, all these evils piled up together in one horrible heap, and with them the bones of all who have ever died, as well as of those who shall yet die, and alas! according to the testimony of the Apostle (*a*), all these are the unhappy consequence of sin. Wherefore, by the severity of the punishment you can measure the malice of the offence.

3. Yet, withal, this malice is nowhere seen more clearly than on the height of Calvary. For, in order to make due reparation to the Divine Justice for this one sin of Adam, it was necessary (be moved, ye tender hearts, by the terrible sentence) that the Word should be made flesh, that Jesus Christ should be nailed to the Cross, that a God should die between two robbers.

Yet this is so. All the united labours, sufferings, and virtues of all the saints would have been insufficient of themselves to blot out this single sin. Nay more, though one hundred million souls, each one surpassing in sanctity the life of heaven's queen, had, with this end in view, endured for ten thousand years, with amazing constancy, punishments far surpassing those of hell's fire; nevertheless, this would still be insufficient to make reparation for that one sin. Though the entire world should swim in the blood of atoning victims, it would, according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, have been all in vain, if the blood of Jesus had not been shed—if the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity had not offered Himself up as a Victim to the offended ma

(*a*) Romans v. 12.

jesty of God. Had not this been done the world's sin would not have been expiated, nor God appeased,—so atrocious, so enormous, so truly infinite was the malice and perversity united to this mortal sin. Now, what conclusions do you draw from all this?

First conclusion. If all the pains of the body, if the loss of riches and of reputation, if, in fine, all the calamities of the world, and even death itself are the punishment of Adam's sin, it follows that sin is a greater evil than all these. For, as S. Thomas says, "*The fault has in it more of the nature of evil than the punishment*" (a). Therefore, one ought more willingly to endure every evil than commit a single sin.

Second conclusion. God dies upon the Cross for the sin of Adam (weigh the words accurately one by one),—God dies upon the Cross for the sin of Adam. Nothing less than the blood of a Man-God was able to cancel it. Therefore, it must be a most grievous and detestable evil, because God would not have expired amidst such fierce torments for a matter of light consequence.

Third conclusion. If the Eternal Father did not spare his own Son, although He assumed merely the form of a sinner, and only made Himself a surety for the sin of Adam, how will He treat us—vile slaves, rebellious Deicides, sinners guilty of so many crimes?

AFFECTIONS.

1. Therefore, let us repent of our *past* sins, and preserve ourselves from falling into *future* ones.

(a) P. i. q. 48, a. 6.

2. Weighed down by the burden of our sins, let us *humble* ourselves beneath the Omnipotent hand of God, and let the consideration of them repress in us the desire of being placed above others. 3. Let us cherish a *holy hatred* of our flesh, constantly detesting its allurements as being the source of every sin. Nevertheless, we ought not to occupy ourselves overmuch with these two affections; as the fruit of this meditation consists in an intense *sorrow* for past sins, and an efficacious *horror* of sin in the future. That this fruit may be the more substantial, three things demand our attention.

1. Our principal care must be to occupy ourselves especially with this act, and to elicit it with all the fervour of which we are capable. 2. We should detest our past sins in such a manner as to include in this detestation sensuality and pride, since they are the chief source of all evils. 3. We ought to pass on from a detestation of mortal, to a detestation of venial sins.

For the rest, what is there capable of exciting greater horror in a human breast than sin? And what can excite within us a more intense sorrow, than the Son of God dying nailed to a Cross for our sake. O ye Heavens, the Son of God, by command of his Father, dies upon a cross because of sin! Oh, sight calculated to strike horror into the very demons, and cause the universe to become a total wreck! God dies upon a cross for sin. . . . God! I believe all this, and yet I do not repent of my past sins, nor start back affrighted at the thought of future ones. . . . Nay, rather, I continue to sin, "*crucifying again to myself the Son of God, and making Him a*

mockery" (a). . . . O thunderbolts of Heaven! what arm restrains you, what cloud arrests your progress!

Ah! my soul! behold your Jesus who dies upon the cross. . . . and He dies not for the sin of Adam alone, but, also, for your sins, . . . and this He does, the while you, with blood-stained hands, are in the very act of crucifying Him. . . . Can you look upon Him, and yet not melt into tears? At this sight the sun is darkened, the rocks are split asunder, the very Gentiles return from the scene striking their breasts, and you—you alone remain insensible! The sepulchres of the dead are opened, the veil of the Temple is rent, all nature is convulsed, while you alone, O sinner, are not moved! You alone! you, more hardened than steel, gaze with tearless eyes upon your Saviour hanging from the cross, and already expiring amid the most horrible torments! Nay more, you dare to renew this pitiful sight one hundred and one thousand times!

Ah! let my tears at length gush forth, let me heave deep sighs, let sadness take entire possession of my soul, that I may weep as I ought the offence offered to the majesty of God, which I now understand, and which it is impossible to learn better than from the death of Jesus Christ. O Jesus crucified! permit me prostrate at your feet, and melted in tears, to testify to you my *grief*; and, in my *horror* of the malice which sin involves, I pray that I may cease to live sooner than I should cease to grieve for, and detest, it. "*As long as breath remaineth in me,*

and the Spirit of God in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak iniquity" (a), nor shall my heart dare to commit it. I shall sacrifice every treasure, I shall endure every evil, rather than again offend Thee even slightly. Yes, even slightly. For, venial sin, also, is the cause of the sufferings and death of Christ, and the sanctity of God abhors it beyond measure. Yes, I too abhor and detest them, and especially the sins of N. N. . . . as well as pride and sensuality, the poisoned sources from which they spring.

I will exclaim with Thomas à Kempis, "*Oh ! how low ought I to cast myself down under the bottomless depths of thy judgments, O Lord : where I find myself to be nothing else but nothing ! I stand astonished and consider that the heavens are not pure in Thy sight. In the angels Thou hast found sin. Stars have fallen from heaven, and I that am but dust, how can I presume ? Oh, then, how humble and lowly ought I to think of myself !*" (b). O how deserving of detestation is the appetite for honours and pleasures, the unhappy source of every evil !

Yes ! I have already adopted my unalterable resolution. Like S. Paul, I also will "*chastise my body, and bring it into subjection :*" (c)—that body which was to you, my Jesus, the occasion of so many sufferings, and of such a bitter death. Like David, I, too, will "*make myself meaner than I have done : and I will be little in my own eyes*" (d). I will serve Thee, my Lord God, I will serve Thee, in that manner

(a) Job xxvii. v. 3.

(b) Imitation of Christ, Book iii. ch. xiv.

(c) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

(d) 2 Kings vi. 22.

which shall be pleasing to Thee, and with full and absolute indifference to everything.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Concerning the punishment of sin in the *angels*, consider, 1. *Who* it is that condemned them to such punishment. It was a God of infinite *Justice mercy, wisdom and sanctity*. 2. Consider *who* those are whom He so severely punishes? They are the princes of Heaven, the assistants at his throne; the most beautiful and intelligent of created beings; in number countless; most exalted in respect of their rank. 3. Consider *why* it was He punished them. For one mortal sin. O God! for *one sin only, and that their first and a sin but of thought*. 4. *How* did he punish them? By a punishment intense in the *highest degree, eternal* in its duration, and involving an *infinite* loss. 5. *When* did He punish them? At a time when there did not exist any example of former punishment to serve them as a warning. Oh, what a dreadful thing, then, must sin be!

What conclusion do you draw from all this? 1. That sin ought to be avoided and detested with intense *hatred and detestation*, because it is so offensive to God, because hell, into which the angels were hurled, is open to receive you also, because that God, who is so outraged by sin, still exists. . . . He exists,—and woe to you if his justice should overtake you in the state of sin. 2. That as sin is so offensive to God, we should lament our past sins with most intense *grief*, and avoid future ones with the greatest *horror*.

II. Concerning the sin of our First Parents, consider how they had no sooner tasted the forbidden fruit, than they were condemned to death, and exiled from the terrestrial Paradise; the earth was cursed, and the stain and punishment of their sin were transmitted to their posterity. 2. Represent to yourself, as collected together, all the physical and moral evils that ever have been, that are, or that shall be in the world, and reflect that they are all the punishment of sin. 3. Behold Jesus, the Son of God, made man, suffering and dying upon a cross, and this solely to satisfy Divine Justice for the sin of man. Neither the virtues of all the saints, nor the excellences of all the heavenly spirits would have been sufficient to blot out a single sin, so that, for this purpose, no less a sacrifice was required than that the Man-God should shed the last drop of his most precious blood.

Wherefore, conclude—I. That since sin is a greater evil than all the other evils in the world, we ought to endure them all rather than commit sin.

II. That if no one but God alone was able to blot out sin, it must be the greatest and most abominable of all evils.

III. That if God did not spare his only-begotten Son, because He made Himself a surety for man, how much more will He punish man himself, who has incurred the actual guilt of sin?

LECTURE.

On Sorrow and detestation for Sin.

Having laid the principal foundation of our Spiritual Edifice, by establishing the obligation which we

have of serving God after the manner in which He wishes to be served—that is, in that state of life, or in the state already chosen, in that office, place, condition of health, and degree of perfection to which He shall be pleased to call us, and our consequent obligation to be indifferent to all these things—having laid, I say, this foundation, we must next remove the principal *impediments* which lie in the way of this indifference, and which, necessarily, are also impediments to the attainment of our last end.

Now, these impediments consist as well in the natural *desire* of honours, pleasures, riches, health, and a life of ease, as in *shrinking from* slights, poverty, tribulations, and a life of greater perfection. Or, to put the matter more briefly, they consist in an inordinate love of *pleasures* and *pre-eminence*, and in an undue repugnance to *humiliations and troubles*. To these two, as to primary sources, all the other impediments may be referred, since it is because of this undue *love* or *hatred* that we withdraw ourselves from that state of golden indifference which God requires of us, and, in doing so, sin. For, as Jesus Christ has said that “*every evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit,*” and even that “*an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit* (a),” it follows that all the acts proceeding from this poisoned root of inordinate love or hatred, which withdraws us from this heavenly indifference, are *sins*, and are either mortal or venial, according as they remove us wholly, or in part, from our last end.

II. In order, then, to wean our blind will from this hurtful *appetite* for honours, pleasures, and

riches, and to reconduct it, by lessening our *aversion* to humiliation, poverty, and troubles, into the path of indifference already mentioned, which leads towards our last end, S. Ignatius proposes for our consideration the malice, the baseness, and the evil effects of sin; to the end that, by discovering the source whence so much evil flows, we may learn to fly and detest it. I have spoken of "the source from whence so much evil flows," because (I would call your most particular attention to this) whenever, in these meditations on sin, we shall be led to detest the crimes of which we are guilty, we should never fail to abominate and detest at the same time the disordered love of *pre-eminence and of pleasure*, and that undue aversion to humiliations and tribulations from which all sins proceed.

To inspire us with a more effectual sorrow and detestation for sins, S. Ignatius endeavours—1. To paint for us in the most lively colours the malice of even a single mortal sin, and, for this purpose, proposes for our consideration the punishment inflicted on the angels and on our first parents, so that we may be in a position to form an estimate of the gravity of the offence, from the severity of the chastisement with which it was visited. And, in truth, a picture so terrible is well calculated to inspire dread into even the most hardened hearts.

2. Since what immediately affects ourselves touches us more forcibly than what has reference to others, the saint proposes for our consideration, in the next meditation, the number, the heinousness, and the malice of *our personal sins*, which, being thus brought home to us, cannot fail to inspire us with a most intense sorrow, excite in us a spirit of penance,

and lead us to regard them with a feeling of the greatest aversion.

3. Finally, since there are some who are restrained from sin most effectually through the fear of the punishment which it entails, S. Ignatius places before us the terrible chastisements to which sinners shall be subjected in hell for all eternity.

The fruit which the saint wishes us on to-day to gather from these meditations is "*an intense sorrow for our sins, and an abundance of tears*" (a). For, during the entire of this week (as he tells us elsewhere), "*we seek for sorrow and tears for sin*": (b)—and not merely an ordinary sorrow, but such a grief as may enable us "*to feel internally a detestation for our crimes,*" and may induce us to abhor all those allurements which lead us on to sin.

Wherefore, the object which we propose to ourselves to-day, is to conceive a *vehement grief*, and an *efficacious horror* of the sins which we have committed, as well as of pride and sensuality which have been their primary *cause*. Let this day, then, be diligently employed in endeavouring to stir up within ourselves this *grief* and this *horror*. For, as *indifference* to the various means by which God wishes us to attain our last end furnished matter for yesterday's Exercises; and as the object to be gained on to-morrow will be an intimate *knowledge of ourselves*, that we may humble and hate ourselves; so the *purification* of our souls, by means of a serious detestation of sin and of its causes, is the end to be kept

(a) Lib. Exercit. Hebd. 1. Exercit. 2. prælod. 2.

(b) Lib. Exercit. adnotat 4.

in view to-day. This end is best attained by means of *contrition* and *confession*.

§ II.

Contrition, as defined by the Council of Trent, “*is a sorrow of mind, and detestation of sin committed, with a purpose of sinning no more*” (a)—that is, a sorrow including in itself, at one and the same time, *grief* for sins past, and a *horror* of future sins. To excite this contrition, as it were, by artificial means, S. Ignatius not only forbids us to indulge in laughter, and in words provocative of mirth, but would even have us banish such pious thoughts as are of an agreeable nature; and desires that we should cultivate instead a spirit of pious sadness, for which purpose our apartment should be kept darkened, and we should increase our corporal austerities. The saint forbids the first, “*because every such thought is a hindrance to tears, and to that sorrow for sin, towards which all our efforts ought to be directed*”. He counsels the second, “*that we may attain a heartfelt sorrow for sin, and an abundance of tears*”. In the next place, to excite our sorrow the more, he puts before us, at the end of the first meditation, Jesus Christ dying upon the cross: while, in the second and third meditations, he invites us to consider the infinite mercy of God, extending pardon to us from time to time, and so often, while He hurls into hell countless other souls, who are, perhaps, less guilty than we are.

II. The other additional reasons which should be an inducement to us to strive after this *intense* sor-

row are :—1. That in proportion to its intensity will be the abundance of grace which we shall afterwards receive. 2. The more intense it is, the more shall we cancel of the temporal punishment which is due to our sins, and which must be endured either in this life or in the next. 3. Our perseverance in the practice of virtue shall be also more steady ; for our present frequent relapses may be traced to the fact that we so rarely repent with a truly intense sorrow. 4. In proportion to the intensity of our grief will also be the substantial peace of mind which we shall enjoy—a peace springing from a hope sweet beyond measure, and an indescribably delightful security of mind, by which we trust that we have obtained the friendship of God. On the other hand, a languid repentance renders our hope of pardon doubtful, our friendship with God cold, and a relapse easy ; while it diminishes the satisfaction due for our sins, and causes the streams of grace to flow less abundantly upon our souls.

The means to attain this intensity of grief are :—1, Prayer ; 2, Corporal austerities ; 3, To represent to ourselves our entire life, and to place before us all our sins as it were piled up together, saying with Ezechias, “ *I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul* ” (a). For, what horror will it not excite within us, to see thus collected before our eyes our accumulated sins—so numerous, so grievous, so abominable !

III. One of the principal motives, however, to excite us to a most bitter sorrow is the idea of Jesus crucified, and the thought of the infinite mercy and

(a) Isaias xxxviii. 15.

goodness of God. S. Francis, that rival of the seraphim, on contemplating Jesus dying on the cross for sin, burst forth into such cries, that a gentleman, who chanced to pass by, supposed that he had been wounded by robbers. And yet, the saint himself thought his sorrow so lukewarm, that he called upon the neighbouring rocks and caves to weep with him. And lo ! the hard flints gave forth drops of water in such abundance as to form rivulets. O most obdurate and adamantine hearts of mortals ! what are your feelings at such a sight ? The appearance of Jesus upon the cross is sufficient to cause the very rocks to weep, and will you allow yourself to be overcome in tenderness by the rocks ? “ *O angels of peace, weeping bitterly* ” (a), for the sake of the sorrowing mother of my crucified Lord, obtain for me at length by your intercession, bitter and copious tears of contrition.

It happened once in Spain that a sinner, on hearing S. Vincent Ferrer extolling the patience and goodness of God towards sinners, was seized with such a violent grief for his sins that he suddenly fell down dead. And yet, while engaged in meditating upon the self-same truths, we, who have been guilty of, perhaps, greater crimes, remain with souls more dry than the pumice-stone, so that we are forced to conclude either that we have no faith, or that we do not realise to ourselves the malice of sin.

S. Catherine of Sienna, for having through curiosity indulged a little her sense of sight, wept so bitterly, that for a considerable time she refused to be comforted. The blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez

wept unceasingly for many years over a single venial sin. And we, perhaps, can scarcely be brought to drop even a single tear over our many mortal transgressions. What manner of heart is ours? Nor let us excuse ourselves by saying that, to repent in this manner, one needs must be a saint; for, on the contrary, it is necessary to repent so in order to become a saint.

But what do I say?—Sinners themselves shall rise up against us to make us blush: there shall rise up so many penitents of the Thebaid; there shall arise against us that soldier, who, through the intensity of his sorrow, fell senseless at the foot of the pillar of Simon Stilites. There shall rise up that gentleman, who, on hearing Saint Ulric discourse on the malice of sin, was so filled with horror of it that he fell down lifeless. There shall arise against us the many crowds of poor country people, who on hearing the heinousness of mortal sin set forth during the time of a mission, have given way to loud groans, and to torrents of tears. And shall we, religious, shed scarce a single tear? O God, who dost show forth Thy power principally in pardoning and using mercy, *“overlooking the sins of men for the sake of repentance (a), mercifully pour forth into our hearts the grace of Thy Holy Spirit; which, by sighs and tears, may make us wash away the stains of our sins; and draw from our eyes such torrents of tears, as may extinguish the burning flames we deserve for our sins” (b).*

If our sorrow for past sins be heartfelt and in-

(a) Wisdom xi. 24.

(b) Prayer of the Church for the gift of Tears.

tense, it will naturally be accompanied by a horror of future sins. For it is impossible that any one should repent seriously of his past transgressions, and not shrink at the same time from the thought of committing others in the future. That you may the better understand this horror, and test the strength of your resolution in this respect, imagine that you see before you on the one hand the tyrant Antiochus, who, having cruelly put to death six sons of the mother of the Machabees, endeavours to shake the resolution of the youngest one, by the terror of the punishments reserved for him. Represent to yourself the instruments of torture exhibited to view: in one place, the furnaces are blazing, irons are heating, swords are unsheathed, knives are grasped; in another, lie scattered heads that have been struck off, mutilated hands, feet severed from the body, and flayed corpses.

Again, imagine that you are standing before the furnace which Nabuchodonosor, "*filled with fury, commanded to be heated seven times more than it had been accustomed to be heated*" (a). What a dreadful sight it is! You perceive that, although the furnace is already at a white heat, the attendants, nevertheless, cease not to add more fuel to it, until the flame mounts to the height of fully forty cubits above the furnace. Now, what will the young surviving Machabee do at the sight of such terrific torments? Will he taste of the forbidden meats, or will he choose in preference to die in the midst of excruciating tortures? And the children of Babylon—will they bend the knee before the statue of Nebuchod-

(a) Daniel iii. 19.

onosor, or will they suffer themselves to be devoured by the flames? Come, tell me what would you have done, had the alternative been offered to you to sin or to die? The young Machabee already cries out to the tyrant, "*I will not obey the commandment of the king, but the commandment of the law which was given us by Moses*" (a). And in the other instance, Ananias exclaims with his companions, "*Be it known to thee, O King, that we will not worship thy gods, nor adore the golden statue which thou hast set up*" (b). And what would you have said? What would you have done? Would it not be an overwhelming disgrace, that four tender Jewish youths should have had a greater horror of sin than a Christian, a Religious, a priest of Jesus Christ? Oh, if such should be the case, what a reproach will Eleazar one day be to you, who, to save his life, would not so much as pretend to eat the forbidden meats, but publicly cried out "*that he would rather be sent into the other world!*" (c). Remark the words "*into the other world*"; he not only despises all the torments which this world could inflict upon him, but he would have preferred to be cast into the very pit of hell rather than even pretend to sin.

II. O God! in presence of these three examples, what answer will they be able to give, who, without any pressure on the part of a tyrant, or any threat of death, do not hesitate, for a mere nothing, for some base pleasure, to offend and irritate the infinite goodness, the tremendous justice, the immense greatness of God! Ah! the saints say that "*even the very least offence of God is far more intolerable than the*

(a) 2 Mach. vii. 30. (b) Daniel iii. 18. (c) Mach. vi. 23.

fire of hell itself" (a). And yet you sin so easily! you sin so frequently! As you love God, as you fear hell, fly—ah, fly from sin, and not only from mortal, but from venial sins. Yes! fly also from venial sins; for "*more evil is wrought by one even lesser sin, than by all hell together*" (b).

§ IV.

I. As regards *confession*, which is the second means proposed for purifying our souls, although S. Ignatius counsels us to make it after the first week of the Exercises, he suggests, nevertheless, that from the beginning we should go through a general examination of conscience, as being of the greatest importance both for the purifying of our souls, and as a preparation for confession. This can be performed during the free time which is placed at our own disposal; but we should be careful not to devote to it any of the time which has been already marked out for other Exercises. Though in making this examination, we ought studiously to avoid, on the one part, an over-anxious diligence, as being calculated to produce scruples and annoyances; yet, on the other hand, we ought to make it with such an amount of accuracy, as may ensure it being to us, afterwards, and particularly at the hour of death, a source of peace and tranquillity. We ought, therefore, to employ this exact diligence with regard to the *time* elapsed since our last good confession; 2, regarding the *number* and *gravity* of the sins committed since then;

(a) S. Catharine of Genoa.

(b) S. Teresa, in her life written by herself, ch. xxv.

3, regarding the *nature* of the avocations in which we have been since that time engaged ; 4, and regarding the *variety* of the offices which we have since then filled.

II. We should leave it to the judgment of our confessor, to decide whether this examination ought to extend over our entire life, or over a year, or over a shorter period even. However, whether our confession be general or particular, we should always be particularly diligent in confessing those sins which up to that time may not have been well confessed, those which trouble or specially annoy us, and those which we have reason to fear may cause us uneasiness at the hour of death. Let us seek out above all our hidden sins, and sins of omission ;—the good which we have omitted to perform ; our negligence in discharging the duties of our state ; and let our great aim be to confess our sins in the same plain, unvarnished language, which the devil will one day employ, when he stands as our accuser before God.

In one word, we should make this confession with as much diligence as if, immediately after leaving the confessional, we were to be summoned to present ourselves before the tribunal of Jesus Christ ; so that we may feel a certain interior assurance, that in the course of these Exercises we have exactly balanced the accounts of our soul, and that there no longer remains any necessity for further examination. Whoever comes out of Retreat without feeling this security, deprives himself of the principal comfort, and one of the most remarkable advantages which he might derive therefrom.

III. The two greatest difficulties to be encountered in the execution of this so holy and so useful an

undertaking, are the *labour* involved in the examination of our conscience, and the *shame* of confessing our sins. As regards the labour, it will be lightened by considering the priceless advantages which result from it. These are—1, a clearer knowledge of the malice of our sins; 2, a more intense grief for having committed them; 3, a more firm determination to avoid them, and more abundant grace from heaven to carry this resolution into effect; 4, a better preparation for the reception of the most Holy Eucharist; and 5, a more firmly-grounded hope of salvation, and a more secure source of comfort in our last agony.

As regards the shame which we feel in confessing our sins, S. Augustine supplies us with the following motives to enable us to overcome it. The first motive he draws from the person of the sinner himself: "*Why*," he says, "*do you blush to confess what you did not at all blush to commit? Be not ashamed to acknowledge before one, what you were not ashamed to do, perhaps, in the presence of, and with, many.*" You feel no shame in sinning, and are you afterwards ashamed to confess your sin? The Saint draws the second motive from the person of the confessor. "*O man!*" he exclaims, "*why do you fear to confess? I know less of what I learn through confession, than I do of matters of which I am entirely ignorant. Why are you ashamed to confess your sins? I, too, am a sinner like yourself.*" 3. The third motive is drawn from the general judgment. "*Assuredly*," writes the Saint, "*it is better to suffer a little confusion before one, than, branded with infamy, to shrink before the gaze of so many thousands on the*

day of judgment" (a). You are ashamed to confess your sins to one man, while on the day of judgment they shall be manifested to the entire world. To these reasons we may add another, namely, that we must either confess or be damned—there is no alternative.

Wherefore, for God's sake, for the sake of Heaven, for the sake of your own soul, "*be not ashamed to say the truth, for there is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace*" (b). For, to overcome in oneself this kind of shame, is an undertaking worthy of generous souls, and full of glory, as S. Gregory attests, saying—"I admire an humble confession of sins as much as I do acts of heroic virtue: for greater courage is sometimes required to confess a fault than to avoid it" (c).

From the use of these two remedies, namely, an intense *sorrow*, and a sincere *confession*, will follow the *purification* of our soul, which is the second advantage to be aimed at during the first week of the Exercises; the first being the spirit of indifference, which we endeavoured to acquire yesterday. But as the soul cannot be said to be purified at all, if we do not pluck out from it, also, the root of our sins, which, as has been said, consists in *pride* and *sensuality*, we must hold these vices in utter abhorrence, and employ every means to eradicate them from our souls.

To redouble our *sorrow* and *detestation* for sin, we shall, in the next meditation, direct our attention to our personal sins, which, if we bestow due considera-

(a) S. Augustine, Lib. De visit. infr. cap. v.

(b) Eccles. iv. 24, 25. (c) S. Greg. lib. xxii. Moral. cap. x.

tion upon them, will be sufficient to make us tremble from head to foot. We must not, however, examine them *in detail*, but only in a general way; for we are not now making our preparation for confession, but simply meditating on the deformity of our sin, which is so enormous, principally for three reasons: 1. Because of the number and grievousness of our offences; 2, Because of the baseness and ingratitude of the sinner; and 3. Because of the majesty and clemency of Him whom we offend. Wherefore, S. Ignatius proposes these points for our consideration in the following meditation.

N.B. *Those who spend one day only in meditating on sin and hell, may confine themselves to the second and third points of the following meditation—reserving the first point for Spiritual reading during some free hour.*

SECOND MEDITATION.

On our personal Sins.

FIRST POINT.

The malice and heinousness of sin is infinite, because of its intrinsic deformity, and its multiplicity. 1. So great is the *deformity* of even a single sin, that the God of Infinite Beauty hates it with a never-dying and necessary hatred; He abominates and detests it, as being essentially evil, and essentially opposed to His interests. 2. It is so great, that neither the universal deluge which once covered the earth, nor all the fire which shall yet consume it, nor the blood of all the victims that have ever been

offered in sacrifice, nor that of all the martyrs who have ever died, would of themselves be sufficient to atone for it, and wash it out. 3. It is so great, that if, in an impossible hypothesis, the most august Mother of God, and the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, could contract the stain of a single sin, all the splendour of the glory which surrounds them would fade, and in an instant they would become horrible brands from the fire of hell. 4. By sin we absolutely recede from God, according to the teaching of the angelic Doctor, S. Thomas. (2. 2. q. 161, a. 6. in corp.)

Yet, unhappy being, you have, nevertheless, dared many times to soil and to defile with a stain so black and filthy the image of God stamped upon your soul. O God! if a single sinful thought rendered the beauty of the angels so hideous and repulsive, what appearance will I present before the eyes of my Creator, after having sinned so grievously hundreds of times, without remorse, through mere caprice, in pure malice!

II. Ah! the *number* of my many crimes has made me more hideous than the very demons themselves. O God, how numerous my sins are! I, too, shall cry out in sorrow with Antiochus, "*Now I remember the evils that I have done*" (a). Alas! the three faculties of my soul, which ought to have been a living mirror of the Divine Presence, and the Sacred Temple of the most Holy Trinity, have been, instead, as a sewer polluted with filth of every description, "*and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy places*" (b).

(a) 1 Machab. vi. 12.

(b) Matt. xxiv. 15.

My imagination was a store-house of most foolish fancies, my intellect a sink of most foul thoughts, my will the workshop in which every iniquity was fashioned. My five senses were five poisoned fountains ; instruments in the working of every description of wickedness ; gates flung open to admit every vice. The entire series of my years is but an unbroken chain of crime ; the actions of my life are but an accumulation of all kinds of defects and sins. Ah ! while I was as yet but a very small child, I was already a great sinner ; and as my body became developed, my wickedness increased in proportion. My youth (I blush to recall it) was polluted with every infamy, my manhood was held in bondage by unruly passions, and my old age, too, perhaps, may be the slave and the toy of corrupted nature. In a word, my entire life has been one continued sin. Oh ! who then will give to my eyes a fountain of tears to weep for so many faults, and infuse into my soul a due horror of them, that I may detest their wickedness. “ *My God, I am confounded and ashamed to lift up my face to Thee, for my iniquities are multiplied over my head, and my sins are grown up even unto heaven* ” (a).

SECOND POINT.

The heinousness of the sin is increased immeasurably by the baseness and ingratitude of *the sinner*. (1.) The *baseness* of man is exceedingly great, because of the nothingness from which he derives his existence, because of his powerlessness to act, because

of the rottenness and corruption in which his existence terminates, because of the impurities of his body, the sinfulness of his soul, the ignorance which clouds his intellect, and the perverse inclinations which sway his will. A sinner, as compared with other men, is nothing: all men together are as nothing in comparison with a single angel; all the angels are nothing in respect of God. What will you be, then, when compared with the Divine Majesty?

Yet, nevertheless (be horrified, ye heavens!) this handful of dust, this filthy mire, "*hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty. He hath run against him with his neck raised up, and is armed with a fat neck*" (a); saying with Pharaoh, "*Who is the Lord, that I should hear his voice? I know not the Lord*" (b). This worm, so vile, so base, so filthy, has dared "*to cast the Lord off behind his back*" (c). Hide your light, ye stars! God is held of less account than the body since the sensual man prefers the gratification of his unbridled lust to the observance of the most holy law of God. O angels! which excites within you the greater wonder—the impudence of man, who so insolently outrages his Creator, or the patience of God, who so mercifully bears with this monster?

(2.) The *ingratitude* which accompanies so much baseness, immeasurably increases the malice of sin. God has conferred upon you, sinner, favours countless in number, of rare utility, priceless in value, and incalculably great, whether we regard the majesty of the Donor, or the intrinsic value of the gift,

(a) Job xv. 25, 26. (b) Exod. v. 2. (c) Ezek. xxiii. 25.

or the base condition of the recipient. Moreover, the *manner* in which God bestowed these gifts upon you is worthy of attention; for they were the outcome of an *eternal* love, with which He loved you from the very moment in which He commenced to love Himself; of an *infinite* love, the self same with which He loves Himself; and of a purely *disinterested* love, since He cannot possibly derive from it the slightest advantage.

So, then, God has showered down upon you countless favours, and has done so in a manner which argues on His part the greatest love God who is all-sufficient to Himself, who is in Himself infinitely happy! And these favours He has conferred upon *you*—a rebel slave! Upon you, who are but “*as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth*” (a); “*a leaf that is carried away with the wind*” (b); “*a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away*” (c); upon you, a mere nothing, a compound of wretchedness and vice. These favours He has bestowed upon you without any merit on your part; nay, with a foreknowledge of your many sins, He has preferred you to very many other souls who would have served Him with all possible fervour. Yet, nevertheless, with black and most criminal ingratitude, you have dared to offend so generous a God, “*to break his yoke, to burst his bands, and to say : I will not serve*” (d). And, in offending Him, you have made use of His own gifts which He had lavished upon you—the senses of your body,

(a) Wisdom xii. 23.

(c) James iv. 15.

(b) Job xiii. 25.

(d) Jer. ii. 20.

the powers of your soul, the many natural gifts with which you are endowed, and, principally, the health which you enjoy.

O Lord! I confess myself more ungrateful even than the very beasts of the forest, for they, at least, do not offend Thee; more ungrateful than the infidels, and the savage children of nature, to whom You have not granted as many favours as You have conferred upon me; more ungrateful than the very demons themselves, for whom Your Son did not die upon the cross. I confess that this, my *ingratitude*, united to my natural *baseness*, increases immeasurably the heinousness of my sins. But, have mercy upon one who seriously repents! . . . pardon one who promises to be converted.

THIRD POINT.

Finally, the heinousness of sin is infinite, when we come to consider the majesty and clemency of the Being whom we offend. 1. As regards His majesty, not even the intellect of the cherubim is capable of comprehending it; they merely prostrate themselves and adore. Nor need we marvel at this, for He is "*a powerful king, and greatly to be feared*" (a); "*the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the army of heaven standing by him on the right hand and on the left*" (b); and you, a *handful of vile dust, which is blown about by the wind, have dared to provoke such a terrible power* (c). O monstrous crime! Filthy toad that you are, consider who it is that you have offended! He is infinitely powerful, and

(a) Eccl. i. 8.

(b) 2 Paralip. xviii. 18.

(c) S. Bernard, Sermon. xvi. in cant.

in the very moment of your sin could have hurled you into hell. He is all-wise, and his eye, which nothing escapes, was fixed upon you while you were in the act of committing that horrible crime. He is most holy; and the disgust with which He viewed that abomination of yours, was greater than all the joy afforded to Him by the heroic acts of all the saints. Yet, all this notwithstanding, you have dared to offend Him, and to offend Him so many times, and with sins of such an abominable nature.

2. And you dared to offend Him, the very while that His infinite *clemency* was restraining the thunderbolts from descending and reducing you to ashes; while He held in the wild beasts which would have ground you beneath their teeth; while He hindered the demons from hurling you alive into hell. For "*every creature was armed against you for revenge*" (a), and God forbade it. The cry of your iniquities, ascending from the earth, was continually calling down upon you the vengeance of heaven, and God spared you, "*overlooking your sins for the sake of repentance*" (b). Nay, more, He guarded you as the pupil of His eye, and carried you in His bosom as a mother is wont to carry her infant child. Not only this, but He loved you, if not with the love of friendship, which He bestows upon the just alone, yet, with the love of beneficence, *being always mindful of you that He might serve you*. Tell me, then, is not the malice of sin most detestable, by reason of the *majesty and clemency of God who is offended?*

(a) Wisdom v. 18.

(b) *Ibid.* xi. 24.

AFFECTIONS.

1. *An act of sorrow.* O God, I have offended Thee! I Thee a filthy nothing has offended the most beautiful of beings, a vile worm has rebelled against the Supreme Monarch, the slave against his Master, the creature against his Creator, man against his God! And this I have done with unspeakable malice and ingratitude, after having received so many favours at your hands, offending for a trifle, for some paltry gain, for a filthy pleasure, for mere caprice and of pure malice, Thee, my most holy Lord! And I have done this while Your eye was fixed upon me; the while you held out the threat of hell to frighten me from sin; and promised heaven as a reward to tempt me on to virtue; the while You were heaping so many favours upon me, and were pressing me lovingly to Your bosom. And, then, the many times I have offended Thee! after having been so often pardoned by Thee. Ah! I am covered with confusion, I am sorry, I repent. Oh, that my heart would burst itself asunder through the violence of my grief.

2. *Resolution for the future.* But I shall never, never more sin, O Lord! In the presence of the whole court of heaven, and of Thy Divine Majesty, I am determined, and do resolve with all the strength of my free will, to lose, one thousand times, all earthly goods, to forfeit all worldly honours, and to yield up my very life in the midst of the most excruciating torments, rather than ever offend Thee for the future by even a venial sin. No, never more shall I

offend Thee by any sin, and more particularly by the sin of (N.) and (N).

3. *An act of humility.* Ah! “*The confusion of my face hath covered me*” (a); my soul, is, all over, a filthy ulcer. Ah! truly, “*I am an abominable and unprofitable man*, since I have drunk iniquity like water” (b); *for my iniquities are gone over my head*” (c). O accursed pride! origin of all my misfortune, I abominate and detest you with all my soul. Henceforward, I shall neither think, nor do, nor speak anything which savours of pride. Come, insults and scorn, come down upon my guilty head, and avenge the outrages which I have committed against God.

COMPENDIUM.

I. The malice of sin is infinite, because of its intrinsic *deformity*, and of the *number* of times we commit it. (1). Its *deformity* is so great, that God essentially detests it, and hates it as much as He loves himself. It is so great, that all the evils of the world are insufficient to punish it as it deserves. It is so great that, if, in an impossible hypothesis, the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ could defile themselves with a single venial sin, they would, thereupon, become more odious than the demons. And, nevertheless, you have defiled your soul with mortal sin! (2.) And how often have you sinned? Ah! *the multitude* of your sins is innumerable! Retrace, in thought, the years of your life, and be horrified at discovering that no sooner did

you begin to know God, than you began to offend Him.

II. The malice of sin is increased, when we take into consideration the *worthlessness* and *ingratitude* of him who commits it. (1.) The *baseness* of the sinner is very great, when we consider the nothingness of his origin, his impotence to act, the corruption which will terminate his mortal career, the many miseries to which his body is subject, and the malice which enslaves his soul. And yet, this vile compound of filth has dared to offend so often, and so grievously, the infinite majesty of God ! (2.) The *ingratitude* of the sinner, superadded to the baseness of his nature, increases immensely the malice of sin. God has lavished upon man benefits countless in number, of infinite utility, and of priceless value ; and yet, ungrateful Man dares to offend his Benefactor and his Lord ! what a monster is Man !

III. The malice of sin appears still greater, when we reflect on the *majesty* and *clemency* of Him who is offended. (1.) No human intellect is capable of comprehending the majesty of God ; the very cherubim bend down their heads in reverent adoration, and shade their faces with their wings from the brilliant light which dazzles them, while they cry out in wonderment : "*Who is as the Lord !*" (Ps. cxii. 5.) (2.) God's *clemency* is infinite. While you were in the very act of sinning, it restrained the thunderbolts of heaven from reducing you to ashes, it prevented the earth from opening beneath your feet, and saved you from the jaws of hell. Nay more, during the very time when you were sinning, it watched over you, guarded you, loved you. Ah ! after having offended a God so great and so good, you can still

continue to live ! Your heart does not burst with grief ! Nay more, you do not shed even a tear ! not a sigh escapes your lips !

CONSIDERATION.

On the twofold root of sins.

It is not enough to abhor sin with an intense sorrow and detestation, but this detestation must extend itself also to the root of sin ; otherwise, the soul will not be perfectly purified, the fountain of vices will not be dried up, we shall not acquire that golden spirit of indifference after which we are striving, and we shall not advance in the proper manner towards our last end. For this reason, I observed in the Spiritual Lecture, § 1, n. 3, if you remember, that the sorrow and detestation for our sins, which we are striving to stir up within ourselves to-day, should be such as to include a detestation of the roots from which they spring, and that this is the fruit which we should endeavour to gather from the Exercises of this day.

This twofold root consists principally, 1, In a desire of our own excellence—that is to say, in *pride* ; and 2, In a thirst for pleasures, that is *sensuality*. From these ordinarily spring all sins, both mortal and venial—even those of which the parent is avarice ; for we only desire riches in so far as they serve to second our ambitious projects, or to gratify our desires of pleasure. Of the first of these vices the Scriptures testify that “ *from it all perdition took its beginning* ” (a) ; and S. Thomas says, “ *the cause of*

all evil begins from it " (a). The same, according to S. Ambrose, may be said of sensuality ; for being, as S. Thomas explains, the desire of what pleases our senses—that is, of pleasure which reaches the soul through the medium of the organs of the body, as sight, taste, touch, &c.—it follows that it is the filthy source whence flow all those sins which are committed by means of the senses (*b*). The consideration of the effects produced by sin will be of much assistance towards eradicating this twofold root, to which it owes its origin.

I. Consider, then, in the first place, *the deformity of a soul defiled with sin.* If you reflect upon it attentively, you cannot fail to be inspired with feelings of hatred and disgust for yourself. And yet, who can fully realise the horrible deformity of a soul in mortal sin? Collect from the hospitals, the prisons, and the dead-houses of the world, all that is most noisome, and revolting within their walls ; bring together the most horrible monsters which have yet been discovered on land or in the sea ; add to these whatever is most detestable, most abominable, most hateful in the entire of hell—and, alas ! all these are but a dim shadow, a mere nothing, in comparison with the horrible defilement which deforms a soul stained with even a single mortal sin.

A single mortal sin of thought changed the exceeding great beauty of Lucifer into such hideous ugliness, that the very sight of him constitutes one of the greatest torments of the damned ; and so repulsive is it, that some saints who saw him merely in a passing glance, declared that they would prefer

(a) 1. 2. q. 84, a. 2.

(b) 1. 2. q. 3, a. 1.

to walk upon burning coals until the day of judgment rather than see him again, even though it were but for a moment. Now, if a single sin of thought, committed in an instant, makes the most beautiful of the seraphim so hideous, oh! what a horrible spectacle must your soul present, stained as it is with so many and such enormous sins of word, of deed, and of omission! Oh, what a hideous monster must you be in the eyes of God, defiled as you are by so many crimes!

Pause here a little while, and endeavour to picture to yourself in imagination, what I am unable to paint in words. . . . Ugh! how black your soul is! how hideous! So great is the abyss of your deformity that, if there were neither devil nor fire in hell, and if it were emptied of all its torments, the mere sight of you (be horrified at the thought!) would in itself be sufficient to make a most terrible hell. Since, then, you are so infamous, it follows, as a consequence, that *you are deserving of all possible contempt*, yet, nevertheless, "*the pride of thy heart hath lifted thee up*" (a). You—the very off-scouring of hell—desire to be honoured, praised, and preferred to others! You, who are more vile than the devil himself, are indignant at being blamed, despised, or thought less of than others! Truly "*you are exceeding proud*" (b), if all these considerations fail to persuade you to be humble. The peacock which, in its pride, delights to unfold to view the painted glories of its gorgeous plumage, and, swollen with vanity, struts about in the full belief that its beauty far surpasses that of all other birds, no sooner casts

(a) Abdias 3.

(b) Isaias xvi 6.

a glance at the ugliness of its legs, than it at once becomes crest-fallen. And will you not humble your pride, at sight of the abominations with which you are defiled ! In truth, you ought not only to humble yourself, but, in a spirit of holy indignation, to hate your own flesh, which has been the unhappy cause of such repulsive deformity.

This is that powerful motive, which has inspired even the greatest saints with sentiments of the most profound humility, and has filled them with a most bitter hatred of themselves. And justly so. For we despise what is vile ; we detest what is disgraceful ; and since by sin we are both the one and the other, it clearly follows that the *deformity of a sinful soul* is a most powerful incentive to humility, and to the mortification of our flesh.

II. The second powerful motive to incite us to the practice of humility and of mortification, is *the remembrance of hell* which we have merited. For, you have sinned, unhappy wretch ! Your guilty conscience reproaches you with this, and, perhaps you have sinned many times, and sinned grievously. In that case you have merited hell : you have deserved eternal punishment. Many (perhaps less guilty than you) are now burning, and shall for ever burn in those flames. Therefore, you also, as being more guilty, deserve eternal punishment amid those terrible torments. Now, reason with yourself thus : he who has merited hell is deserving of every possible *insult* and *affliction* in this world also ; for he who deserves the greater punishment, merits much more a lighter one. Therefore, since the pain of hell immeasurably surpasses the greatest degree of insult and affliction which can fall

to one's lot in this life, it is evident that, on this score, you are also deserving of every possible insult and trial which the world can inflict upon you. Having already merited hell, then, there is no indignity, no punishment in this world fully proportionate to your guilt; since it will be always true to say that you deserve still greater indignities, and punishments still more severe, on account of your sins. No matter, then, how much you humble and chastise yourself, you will always humble and chastise yourself less than you have deserved by the commission of even a single mortal sin.

You know all this, and yet you are proud! You believe all this, and yet you pamper your flesh! O sinner! even though all the insults, all the indignities, all the calamities, and all the ailments to which man is subject were centered in your person, you would still be treated better than you deserve. You know this; and yet, for the mere shadow of an insult, for the slightest annoyance, you become sad, indulge in complaints, and give way to feelings of indignation. Bear in mind that you have merited all the eternal torments of hell, and that instead of them the infinite goodness of God is content to visit you with that slight insult, that trifling pain. And yet, in your impatience, you murmur, and give way to angry feelings! Nay, more, you grow proud, and pamper yourself! O hell! is not the remembrance of thee sufficient to humble that pride of ours, and to induce us to hate our sinful flesh!

III. The third motive to incite us to humility, is to be found in that strong inclination to evil which we feel within us. For, reader, you may, possibly, again commit mortal sin. This, unfortunately, is a

fact which cannot be called into question. As long as you live, you are liable to fall anew into mortal sin. Even though you should have performed the most sublime miracles; though you should be more perfect in virtue than the august Mother of God herself; though you should have been, like S. Paul, transported to the third heaven, nevertheless, if God should withdraw His grace from you, you may at any moment fall into mortal sin. That soldier of whom we read among the forty martyrs of Sebaste, had bravely endured, almost throughout the entire night, the piercing cold of the frozen water; but just as he was about to be released from his sufferings by death, and his crown was already within his grasp, he yielded to temptation, flung himself into the tepid bath, prepared for those who were willing to apostatise, and died. Two priests in Japan, after having for a period of three years bravely endured, with Father Spinola, a most terrible imprisonment, during which they were even roasted at a slow fire for several hours, suddenly apostatised; and having been cast back into the fire by the executioners, as being renegades from their religion, they died miserable apostates, when they should have nobly died a martyr's death. Wherefore, "*howl, thou fir-tree, for the cedar has fallen*" (a); acknowledge yourself more fragile than glass, and tremble, since you, too, may relapse into mortal sin.

Moreover, since death may surprise you at any moment, you may happen to die in the very act of sin, may be called upon to present yourself in that state before the Judgment Seat of God, and thence

(a) Zacharias xi. 2.

be instantly hurled into hell. O terrible truth ! O powerful motive for self-humiliation ! I have merited hell ; I may sin anew, may die in my sin, and may be damned for all eternity. And yet I indulge in pride ! and I pamper this sinful flesh of mine, which deserves to burn ! If one of the damned could come out of hell, and the time and means of doing penance were granted to him, oh ! with how many and what dreadful punishments would he chastise his body, in order to avoid the danger of relapsing into sin, to appease the Divine justice, and to atone for his former abuse of the Divine mercy. Why, then, do you not act in the same manner ? Is it, perhaps, a lesser favour not to be hurled into hell after having so many times deserved it, than to escape from that dreadful prison after having entered it ? Therefore, “ *humble thy spirit very much* ” (a), and chastise your body as one would do who had returned from hell.

Resolve, then ; 1. to avoid henceforward all those sins—even venial ones, as far as possible—which sensuality and pride have induced you to commit. And, first of all, resolve not to think of, or do, or speak of anything which could possibly bring honour and glory to yourself, or disgrace and shame to others. (Here enter into particulars). 2. Resolve not to allow any vicious indulgence to your senses, and especially to the eyes, the taste, or the touch. Enter into particulars on this point, and do not close this book until you shall have committed your resolutions to writing. 3. Since, according to the plan of S. Ignatius, the advantage to be derived from the con-

sideration of our sins is “*to detest their malice with sorrow, and with suitable satisfaction*” (a), and since he prescribes, with a view to this end, some external penance also with respect to our food, our bed, and sleep, and even the chastisement of our bodies with a hair-shirt, discipline, or other instrument of penance, it follows, as a consequence, that we ought not only to make use of such during the time of retreat, but to propose to ourselves also to continue the use of them afterwards; for, according to the Saint, external penance produces the three following effects: (1.) *It atones in some measure for past sins.* (2.) *A person, thereby, conquers himself in subjecting his inferior nature, which is his sensuality, to his nobler nature, which is his reason.* (3.) *By it we obtain more easily that gift of Divine grace which we are so anxiously seeking* (b); and, above all, it affords us the greatest assistance in eradicating from our souls those poisonous roots of sin—pride and sensuality.

N.B.—The following Examen may be made during the time of spiritual lecture, or at some other time which is not occupied by the ordinary Exercises.

EXAMEN.

On the defects which spring from Pride and Sensuality.

We have to-day detested the malice of our sins, and the root from which they spring. In the present Examen we shall discover the many evils which this root produces, in order that we may be incited thereby to pluck it more effectually from our hearts, and may be enabled to acquire a more thorough knowledge of ourselves.

(a) Directory ch. xi. n. 2. (b) Exercit. in addit. hebd. I.

I. Pride, then, which, according to S. Thomas, is an ill-regulated desire of our own excellence, is not only of its kind a mortal sin, of special malice, and more grievous than all the others, but it is also the fountain and source whence every other sin proceeds, "*since it exercises a sort of universal influence on all other crimes*" (a). Its daughters are principally vain-glory, ambition, hypocrisy, anger, envy, detraction, hatred, rashness, scorn for our neighbour, boastful arrogance, presumption, stubbornness, ingratitude, disobedience, and a spirit of insubordination. For, pride is puffed up without cause, is ambitious of honours, simulates virtue, is enraged when kept in subjection, and murmurs against authority. It is envious, hates those who despise it, believes itself the exclusive possessor of wisdom, is loud in its own praise, looks down upon others, and audaciously presumes to achieve everything of itself. Finally, it is self-willed, ungrateful, disobedient, and rebellious.

Here examine yourself. 1. In all your actions, have you had the pure intention of only promoting the glory of God? or have you sought your own glory through means of them? Do you set undue value upon yourself, and upon your actions? Do you take a foolish complacency in them? Do you boast of them? Do you go about trumpeting your own praises in all directions, in order to win the esteem of men. 2. Examine, also, whether you love positions of distinction, and to soar high above others? Whether, by pretending to be disinterested, humble, and pious, you are secretly working your

(a) S. Thomas 2. 2. q. 162. a. 2. c.

way to high positions, and to offices of distinction ? Whether, through self-esteem, you are displeased at having lowly employments assigned to you ? Whether you are sometimes envious when you see others attaining positions more exalted than your own ? Whether you feel angry when others do not show you respect, or offend you ; and whether you cherish resentment against the person so offending ?

3. Examine, also, whether you belong to the class of those who fancy that they alone know everything ; who despise everybody else ; and lavishly bestow the most extravagant praise upon their own actions ; who are persuaded that no honour is too exalted for their merits ; and believe that they alone can achieve great things ? Who are obstinate in their own opinions, scout the idea of obedience, and pretend to privileges because of some fancied merits ? Who murmur against authority, and sow evil seeds in the community of which they are members, by resisting the regulations of those placed over them ; because, indeed, to their thinking, they have not been fairly treated ?

This brief examen will enable you to discover to what extent pride has cast its roots in your heart ; and you will, accordingly, take measures to eradicate it. “ *Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words : for from it all perdition took its beginning* ” (a).

II. The other plague which poisons our heart is *sensuality*, which is to us the occasion of sins innumerable. It consists in the desire of those pleasures

which affect us through the medium of the senses ; and its daughters are gluttony, drunkenness, sloth, impurity, idleness, curiosity, envy, anger, &c.

Examine your conscience, therefore, with a view to discovering whether you exceed the limits of moderation in eating or drinking ; whether you pamper your body by the use of delicate clothing, by treating yourself to an over-soft bed, or by indulging in overmuch sleep ? whether you have an aversion to labour ? whether you indulge an inordinate love of pleasure ? whether you go in search of amusements ? whether you love indolence ? whether you permit your eyes to glance freely where they will ? whether you regard with envious feelings the ease and tranquillity enjoyed by others ? whether you cultivate particular friendships ? whether you love your relatives with an overdue affection. Strive to discover to which of these failings you are most inclined, and then use every endeavour to eradicate it from your heart, mindful of that sentence of Thomas à Kempis, "*Truly we deceive ourselves through the inordinate love we bear to our flesh*" (a).

N.B.—*The first point of the following meditation may be read preparatory to it ; and the fourth may be read at leisure after the meditation. Those who devote two days to this subject, may meditate on the two first points to-day, reserving the others for consideration on the morrow.*

(a) "Imitation," book i, c. 21.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Hell.

FIRST POINT.

As regards the punishment of the body, the sinner who is lost will suffer in his senses, 1, all the pains which are possible to humanity. He will suffer them all; *and all at one and the same time*; and he shall suffer not only those pains of which we have knowledge, but all possible pains together—"every sorrow shall fall upon him" (a). What horror! On the authority of Galen, the human head alone may become the subject of several thousand different pains; and the damned wretch shall be tortured by all of them at the same moment. The pains are innumerable which may attack, from natural causes, or through human agency, the eyes, the ears, the heart, the hands, the feet, and other portions of the human body; and yet, in hell, all these will torture the sinner at one and the same time. Yes! All of them—as many as the ferocity of tyrants, the cruelty of executioners, and the rage of savages have been able to invent and put in practice—all of them shall wreak vengeance on the sinner, and shall do so united!

2. And the sinner shall suffer all these pains in a most intense degree; though still a finite one, and proportioned to his sins. S. Thomas assures us that the least degree of the pain of hell surpasses in intensity all the torments endured by the martyrs, all

(a) Job xx. 22.

the possible agonies of sickness, and the most severe punishment ever inflicted on criminals, even though all these were put together. How intense, then, how inconceivably great must be the highest degree of the torments of hell? Ah! many a time a tooth-ache is sufficient to madden us, and drive us into frenzy. What shall it be, then, to be compelled to endure for ever those innumerable, most acute, and most intense tortures, which shall be rained down for ever upon the damned!

3. *And this shall last for ever.* Alas! for ever!—without ever a change, ever a respite, ever relief, ever a comfort of any kind; but eternally, continuously, despairingly, mercilessly. In this present life, every pain, anguish of whatever kind is tempered by some intervals of relief; but within that abyss of punishment the torture is never, never relaxed. Ah! we would deem it an unsufferable punishment, were we compelled to pass even a single night in a most luxurious bed without being able to move: what shall it be, then, to find ourselves chained immovable in that deep abyss, amid such terrible torments! to find ourselves, after the lapse of a thousand centuries, tortured by the same intense pains which devoured our very vitals on our first entry into that furnace! to find that neither the lapse of time, nor the habit of suffering brings the slightest alleviation of the agonies which we endure! O mortals!—“*which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?*” (a)

SECOND POINT.

1. As regards *the punishments of the soul*, the most terrible torment of the damned in hell will be this thought: God died upon the cross to save me—and, nevertheless, I am lost. Christ shed every drop of His blood to rescue me from hell—and, yet, I am damned. The Holy Ghost left no means untried to make me a citizen of heaven—and, after all, my abode is in the infernal abyss. I, a Christian, . . . a religious, . . . a priest, . . . who have been brought up in the bosom of the Church, who have lived in the secure abode of a religious house, who have been fed so often with the Bread of Life. . . . Alas! I, who was created for heaven, who had used to meditate so often on the punishments of hell, who taught so many others the way of salvation—Alas! I, myself am lost!

2. *And I am lost through my own fault.* Ah! how easily I might have secured my salvation! I had in abundance the means to do so; copious streams of grace were ever flowing round me; nor were bright examples wanting to urge me on. Behold! the self-same crown which now encircles the brow of one who was my companion upon earth, the same resplendent robe in which he is now clad, was destined for me as well, if I had only persevered in the good career upon which I had entered. . . . But, (oh, anguish!) I was inconstant in my good purposes. I am lost—and through my own fault.

3. And, I have chosen this miserable lot, for *a nothing*: “*for a handful of barley, and a piece of*

bread" (a) and "a little honey" (b), and "the pottage of lentils" (c). Ah! for a momentary pleasure. I now endure the eternal torments of hell! . . . In one word: *I*, who was prevented by so many graces,—through *my own fault*, and of pure malice—and for a *nothing*—am buried in hell.

4. And, I have buried myself here by "*walking through hard ways*" (d); enduring heavier afflictions, greater hardships and labours, in the way of iniquity and perdition, than I should have had to endure had I pursued the path of virtue. Ah! unhappy wretch that I am! I have purchased hell at a dearer price than it costs the saints to win heaven; and I have had to suffer more to burn for ever in this fiery prison, than they have borne to enjoy Paradise for eternity. Such are the lamentations which will burst forth in hell from those who have sinned and "*are consumed in their wickedness*" (e).

And this is that regret, this the worrying thought, which, ever revolving in their brain, shall punish with unspeakable torture the *intellect* of the damned. Their *memory* will be tormented by the remembrance of the vanity of their past, the miseries of their present, and the gloomy eternity which the future opens up before them. Their *will*, plunged in an abyss of sorrow and despair, agitated by the fury of its own passions, enraged against itself, and, as it were, devouring itself, shall, amidst the most horrible blasphemies, "ever wish what never shall be; shall never wish what ever shall be; shall never obtain

(a) Ezech. xiii. 19.

(b) 1 Reg. xiv. 43.

(c) Gen. xxv. 34.

(d) Wisdom v. 7.

(e) Wisdom v. 13.

that which it wishes for, and shall always have that which it wishes not" (a). What tongue can tell, what pen can paint the horrible nature of this punishment! For "*neither hath eye seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what Thou, O God, hast prepared for those who offend Thee. Oh, what an insufferable thing is hell!*" (b) Woe, then, to those whose portion shall be in this "*pool burning with fire and brimstone*" (c).

THIRD POINT.

The pain of loss. Nevertheless, the number and severity of all these punishments are a mere trifle, when compared with the pain arising from the loss of the vision of God. Multiply the tortures of hell one thousandfold, and they are nothing as compared with this loss. It is S. John Chrysostom who says so: "*If any one,*" he says, "*should name a thousand hells, he would still fall short of saying what a punishment it is to be excluded from the privilege of beholding that glory*" (d). Dreadful sentence! for if one hell alone is the centre of all evils and all torments, what will a thousand hells be? A thousand hells! and, yet, according to S. John Chrysostom, not even a thousand hells, though multiplied one hundred thousand times, are equal in punishment to the single pain of loss. The reason is, because this punishment is infinite, not only in its *extension*, that is, in respect of the period for which it is to last, but

(a) S. Bernard, lib. v. de consider c. xi.

(b) Chrysostom, lib. de Reparat. (c) Apoc. xxi. 8.

(d) S. Chrysostom, Hom. xxiv. in cap. vii. Matt.

also in its *intensity*, that is, in respect of the good of which it deprives us. As, then, the greatest happiness conceivable consists in seeing God, who is infinitely lovable, so the greatest possible calamity is to be cast out from his sight. Nay, as S. Augustine declares, the greatness of the loss suffered in being excluded from the vision of God, can be measured only by the greatness of God Himself (a).

At present, while we are still sojourners in this world, we seldom entertain an ardent desire of seeing God, "*and because we are ignorant of the greatness of this heavenly treasure, we fail, also, in understanding how great an evil it is to be deprived of it*" (b). But once we shall have laid aside the trappings of our mortality, the mind will be filled with such appreciation of this treasure, it will burn with such an ardent desire of enjoying it, it will feel itself borne onwards with such force to possess it, that of all the torments of hell, the greatest and most intolerable for the damned soul will be to find herself removed from the vision of her Creator. In a word, "*she will be tortured more by the loss of heaven than by the flames of hell*" (c).

Nor need this surprise us : for so infinite is God's beauty, that, if the damned could gaze upon it, if but for an instant, not only would they cease to feel the pains of hell, but would even fancy themselves suddenly transported to heaven. And, therefore, those miserable wretches would willingly endure a thousand hells, if it were only permitted them to

(a) S. Augustine, lib. xix. De Civ. Dei. cap. 23.

(b) Chrys. Hom. 47 ad pop. Antioch.

(c) S. John Chrysostom.

behold, even for an instant, that incomprehensible beauty. But in vain ; their sins have shut out His face from them, and this for ever for ever.

FOURTH POINT.

The eternity of the punishments. The most terrible of all the terrible punishments of hell is the eternity of this loss, the never-ending duration of this punishment. The day of judgment shall arrive ; the universe shall become a ruin ; after its destruction a thousand years will glide by, and after these many other hundreds of thousands of millions of years ; yet, after the lapse of all this time, not a single minute will have been taken from eternity. In their turn, there shall pass by as many thousands of centuries as there are grains of sand upon the sea-shore, leaves upon the trees, and stars in the firmament ; yet, all the while, the torments of the damned will be only at their commencement, and will be, as it were, ever beginning anew. Nor is this enough : after the lapse of this immense series of years and centuries, there shall pass by as many other centuries as there are atoms upon the earth and drops of water in the ocean ; and lo ! the damned shall be still in tortures ; they shall be eternally miserable, "*that all flesh may know that the Lord hath drawn his sword out of its sheath, not to be turned back*" (a).

For "*there shall be death without dying, an end yet no ending, and infirmity yet no failing ; for death lives there, and the end is ever beginning, and the failing cannot fail*" (b). "Where you would think

(a) Ezech. xxi. 5. (b) S. Gregory, lib. ix. moral. cap. 49.

that eternity must end, there it is also beginning," says S. Hilary. Do not say that this seems to attribute cruelty to God, "*for eternal punishment may justly be inflicted for what never can be expiated*" (a); and since the malice of sin is, in a certain measure, infinite, it is necessary, also, that the punishment should be infinite in some degree, and at least perpetual in its duration. Otherwise there would no longer be any just proportion between the crime and its punishment, and the wisdom of God would have failed to supply us with a motive sufficiently powerful to withdraw us from sin; as we see in the case of purgatory, the pains of which, though most excruciating, are powerless to deter us from the commission of a very great number of venial sins. If in hell there were a hope of redemption, the worm of the damned would finally die, and their punishment would cease to be eternal. But God has sworn that "*their worm dieth not*" (b), and that "*they shall go into everlasting punishment*" (c), therefore they shall remain there for eternity.

O eternity! O word, short, but of most bitter meaning! Ah! if the mere sting of a wasp or of a mosquito were to last for ever, we should look upon it as an unbearable torture; what shall it be, then, to be chained in the centre of so many tortures, there to suffer without respite all possible pains, and to suffer them for ever. O horrible thought! for ever, for ever, for ever. "*Woe to you who do not believe these truths until they are forced upon your conviction by experience*" (d).

(a) S. Bernard.

(c) Matt. xxv. 46.

(b) S. Mark ix. 45.

(d) Euseb. Emissenus.

AFFECTIONS.

1. *An act of faith.* O most wise God, Infallible Truth! I believe that there is a hell, that one becomes deserving of it by the commission of even a single mortal sin, that innumerable souls which were created for heaven, are, through mortal sin, precipitated into this abyss, and are there punished by Thee, whose justice can never chastise beyond what the crime deserves, and whose mercy always inclines Thee to deal lightly with the sinner; from which I conclude that, when I sin, my crime far exceeds the punishment allotted to it, and that sin should, consequently, be detested beyond everything else. Wherefore, I will, with all possible diligence, fly from everything which *leads to* sin, and I will avoid especially this venial sin (N.), this occasion (N.), this defect (N.), and this passion (N). On the other hand, I will embrace with my entire soul whatever *leads away* from sin, and, in particular, those means (NN.), which are of more than ordinary efficacy in preventing one from offending God. For "*It is better to go into life maimed or lame, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire*" (a).

2. *An act of detestation of sin.* Let the most august Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—be my witness, that I prefer rather to be cast into hell than to stain my soul with a single mortal sin. Yes, I am willing rather to burn for ever in flames, being pure and innocent, than to enjoy heaven for eternity if defiled with mortal sin.

And I abominate not only mortal sins, but, also, those venial sins which gradually lead to their commission; and, above all, I detest the accursed root from which spring *sensuality* and *pride*.

3. *An act of self-humiliation.* O God of vengeance! I have sinned; I have merited hell. If you had acted upon your rights, I would have been, for many years past, numbered with the damned, I would be a burning brand in hell's fire, worthy of all possible contempt and loathing. And yet I am proud! It is possible that once again I may sin mortally; it is possible that I may die in my sins; and it is possible, O my God, that I may yet be damned. Nevertheless, I still am proud! Perhaps I will sin, perhaps I will die in that state, perhaps I will be damned, and yet I give way to feelings of pride. "*In truth, I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, because I have deserved for my sins hell and everlasting fire*" (a).

4. *An act of hatred of ourselves.* O my Lord God! I have, alas! preferred my body to Thee, and, through love of it, have offended Thee, the infinite Goodness. That I might gratify it with the enjoyment of a momentary pleasure, I have exposed it to the risk of eternal damnation. Filled with confusion, I confess to Thee my folly. But I now swear before Thee, that, henceforward, I shall take vengeance on myself. Perish the body, provided the soul be not lost. Let my senses suffer for a while, that my spirit may not be tortured for eternity. Oh, if one of the damned could but return to life, in what manner would he treat his body? Gratitude bids

me act as he would ; since it is a greater favour never to have been cast into hell, than, having been once precipitated into it, to be permitted to return. Wherefore I shall deny my senses the gratifications (N.N.), and shall chastise my body by (N.).

5. *An act of indifference.* O my first Beginning, and my last End ! who hast created me to serve Thee in that manner which is pleasing to Thee ; behold, "*as clay is in the hand of the potter*" (a), so am I in thy hand. "*Turn me round which way Thou wilt : lo, I am thy servant, ready to obey thee in all things*" (b). Ah ! that state of life to which you called me, or that degree of perfection in the state already chosen, to which you invite me is not hell ; that office, that place, that condition of health is not hell. Therefore, I offer myself to Thee as indifferent to everything ; for what will it profit me to have had all comforts and honours in abundance, if I lose my soul ; and what loss will it be to have lived a life of misery and contempt, if even, so, I am saved ? We never perceive these truths so clearly as when they are illuminated by the glare which comes from the fire of hell.

6. *An act of gratitude and of sorrow.* O sovereign Lord of life and death, I thank thee for not having visited me with death after my first sin ; and for having, so mercifully, granted me time and grace to repent. Ah ! if a sudden death had come upon me when I was in that state of sin (I shudder at the thought), hell would now be my dwelling-place. Thou hast condemned others, and Thou hast pardoned me ; for Thou hast loved me, who am the

(a) Jeremias xviii. 6. (b) "Imitation," book iii. ch. 15.

most vile of all, more than Thou hast loved others. How, then, was it possible that I could have offended a God who has been so merciful towards me! I am sorry from the very bottom of my heart, and I grieve for my offences with all the vehemence of feeling of which my soul is capable, and I resolve to die a thousand times rather than to offend Thee, ever, ever more.

COMPENDIUM

I. As regards the punishment of the *body*, the damned shall suffer in hell; 1. *All possible pains*, and all of them *at one and the same time*. “*Every sorrow shall fall upon him.*” 2. They shall suffer them in a most *intense* degree, because the least possible pains of hell immeasurably surpasses the very greatest endured in this life. 3. They shall suffer them for ever, without respite, without relief, without comfort of any kind.

II. With respect to the *punishment of the soul*, the damned soul will suffer most excruciating torture from this thought alone: God died upon the cross to save me, and yet I am lost. . . . I, a Christian, a priest, a religious, who have pointed out the very way of salvation to so many others, I am damned. 2. And I am damned through *my own fault*, since I could have so easily worked out my salvation. 3. And I am damned *for a nothing*, for a pleasure which lasted but a moment. 4. Nay, more, I have endured greater hardships, walking the paths of sin, than would have sufficed to ensure my salvation!

III. *The pain of loss*, or the exclusion from the

beatific vision of God, constitutes by far the greatest punishment of the damned ; and so great is it, that, in comparison, a thousand hells would be a trifle to endure, for it means the loss of God's infinite beauty, and it is, therefore, a loss infinite in its intensity.

IV. *The eternity of the punishment.* This immense loss shall be eternal, and these excruciating torments must be endured for ever. Millions of millions of years shall pass by, and billions of millions of centuries shall roll on, and still the damned shall find themselves damned for ever, "*that all flesh may know that the Lord hath drawn his sword out of its sheath, not to be turned back*" (a).

(a) *Ezekiel xxi. 5.*

Third Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Death.

FIRST POINT.

DEATH teaches us to despise worldly goods, which constitute the first obstacle to our entire indifference to all things, and are the first impediment to our progress towards the attainment of our last end. The sentence has already gone forth: "*thou shalt die the death*" (a). Thou shalt die: not others in thy stead; but thou, thou thyself shalt die: and this, once only; for "*it is appointed unto men once to die*" (b). Moreover, you shall die when you least expect it: *for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come*" (c). You shall die uncertain of the time, and the manner, and the place of your death. . . . Without having the slightest shadow of a hope left you of being able to return and remedy the faults you have committed. In one word, sooner or later, despoiled of all you possess, and abandoned by everybody, "*thou shalt go into the house of thy eternity*" (d); and you will go there unaccompanied, for "*every one of us shall render account to God*

(a) Gen. ii. 17.

(c) Luke xii. 40.

(b) Heb. ix. 27.

(d) Eccles. xii. 5.

for himself (a) ; and you will go there despoiled of everything, "*for we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we carry nothing out*" (b). Unaccompanied, then—despoiled of everything.

O God, we believe all this, and yet our hearts are so rooted in the perishable goods of this world, that, for sake of them, we stray away from our last end ; and, captivated by their seductive pleasures, we permit them to draw us off from that golden indifference which is so necessary to us, and we refuse to attain that higher degree of perfection to which the Lord is pleased to call us. O child of earth ! "*under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering*" (c). Behold thy entire inheritance—rotteness and worms. Out of all that you possessed, your friends will clothe you, for the last time, in your most worthless garment ; the rest you must leave behind. "*For when he shall die, he shall take nothing away*" (d). Nothing—absolutely nothing : "*As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return, and shall take nothing away with him of his labour*" (e).

Hast thou heard it ? Thou shalt carry nothing with thee—none of thy money, none of thy property, none of thy estates. Nor will you, O religious, take with you any of those pretty trifles on which you have set your affections, which you used to carry about with you at such inconvenience, and which you could not bear that others should so much as touch. Take them now : carry them away with you if you can. Meanwhile, your soul, which has sought for

(a) Rom. xiv. 12. (b) 1. Tim. vi. 7. (c) Isa. xiv. 11.

(d) Psalm xlviii. 18.

(e) Eccles. v. 14.

and has loved such things so immoderately, shall burn in the excruciating flames of purgatory, abandoned by all, even by those who now enjoy your property. Oh! is it not, indeed, the very excess of folly, to be unwilling to sacrifice to God at present, and with so much merit, that which you must hereafter abandon, whether you will it or not? Is it not impious to throw away so many degrees of grace, and, consequently, so many degrees of glory, rather than deprive yourself of those childish trifles? And for such vain frivolities, refuse to ascend to a greater degree of perfection?

Alas! who will not pity the blindness of those religious, who, after having generously renounced their title to their family possessions, and after binding themselves down by a vow of poverty, are ever sighing for little articles of convenience, and for worthless baubles; oftentimes desiring them more eagerly, and loving them more immoderately than worldlings love their colossal fortunes. Oh! how they will find themselves confounded at the hour of death, when they behold Jesus Christ upon the cross, poor, and stripped of everything, reproaching them with their too luxurious and too convenient poverty? Come, take courage! Conquer yourself, and offer up to-day, at the foot of the cross, that which you shall be forced to surrender at the hour of death. Jesus expects this gift at your hands. Ah! "*he is indeed too covetous, for whom the possession of God is not sufficient*" (a).

(a) S. Augustine, lib. xiii. Confess. cap. 8.

SECOND POINT.

Death teaches us to despise worldly honours, which are the second impediment to the above-named indifference, and to the attainment of a higher degree of perfection. Come hither, O conceited follower of vain-glory—you who permit yourself to be blinded by this smoke, and to be drawn away from your last end—come hither; approach this tomb; look upon that corpse; fix your eyes well on that putrid carcass. Behold, whether you wish it or not, “*hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no further, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves* (a). All the glory which now surrounds your name; all the splendour attached to the offices which you fill, shall vanish at the hour of death like a shadow. As the banners which accompany you to the tomb are lowered, and as the funeral torches are put out, your fame, also, will be extinguished; and with the last toll of the funeral bell will die out the sound of your name. In a word, after this, you “*shall be as if you had not been*” (b). Even a man whose fame is bounded only by the confines of the earth, “*when he shall die shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him*” (c). You are aware of all this; and yet you stretch forth your arms so eagerly to embrace this cloud, this shadow—this nothing!

O proud man! death will come upon you when least you expect it; perhaps in this very month it will despoil you of all the trappings of your greatness, and will cast you into the tomb, where you

(a) Job xxxviii. 11. (b) Wisdom ii. 2. (c) Psalm xlviii. 18.

will no longer be great, or noble, or mighty; but the food of worms, a mass of corruption, a handful of ashes—nothing. What, then, will it avail you to have been called learned; to have occupied that professorship of which you were so proud; to have attained to those exalted positions; to have received those distinguished honours, if, because of them, your soul burns in purgatory? You will be forced to say with a certain emperor: "*I have been all things, and the only advantage it brings me is, that at the point of death I am tortured at the thought that it has been so.*"

A few days after death, one religious appeared to another, and said to him: "I was once on a time a famous theologian, and it is nothing; I was a great preacher, and it is nothing; I held the post of superior, and it is nothing; I was a religious, and that is something." Having uttered these words, he disappeared. Learn from this that things which we upon earth prize very highly, are regarded as *nothing* by the dwellers in the other world. Therefore, "*it is vanity to be ambitious of honours, and to raise one's self to a high station*" (a). Therefore, it is an excess of folly, for the vain desire of honours, to abandon the golden principle of indifference, and the path of salvation. O death! what a teacher of humility thou art!

THIRD POINT.

Death teaches us to fly from the allurements of the flesh, which are the third obstacle to the spirit of indifference, and to a more perfect life. Come, O soul,

(a) "Imitation of Christ," book i, chap. 1.

and see. Come to the grave, and gaze upon that corpse—once the body which you inhabited. Contemplate the ultimate destiny of that flesh, through love of which you expose yourself to the danger of damnation, and shrink from embracing a more perfect life. Look upon it: those two wells, whence worms issue, were once your eyes—the rocks, perhaps, upon which your innocence suffered shipwreck. Those pieces of putrid flesh were once your mouth and your tongue—fatal instruments of gluttony. That spacious nest of worms was your belly, which you adored as your god. This entire mass of rottenness was your body—that idol of your self-love, to which so many times you sacrificed your conscience.

Come; take up that skull, handle those bones, mix those ashes together, gaze upon that nursery of worms. Tell me, is it not extreme folly to wander away from one's last end for the sake of that mass of corruption? Is it not madness to concentrate all the labours, all the cares, all the anxieties of life on procuring the means of a brief enjoyment for this accumulation of filth—that it may sleep better, live more delicately, and be more luxuriously nourished—and, meanwhile, bestow not the slightest care on the salvation of the soul? "*O earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord*" (a), "*no man can serve two masters*" (b). It is impossible to serve God and the flesh at one and the same time.

The fruit which we ought to gather from this meditation is a constant hatred of those three impediments, which, principally, destroy within us the

(a) Jerem. xxii. 29.

(b) Matt. vi. 24.

holy spirit of indifference to all things, and remove us from our last end. These S. John calls "*the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*" (a).

AFFECTIONS.

O God, supreme Lord of life and of death ! I believe that I shall die, because by Thy command "*we all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth*" (b). And we die without a foreknowledge of the time, since Jesus Christ has said : "*At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come*" (c). I believe that a bad death cannot be remedied. I believe that I shall pass from this world to another, after being stripped of all honour and dignity, and that my body shall be reduced into filthy ashes, since the Holy Ghost tells me "*dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return*" (d).

O Lord, I confess my belief in all these truths, and yet I live as if I should never die. I live as if I "*had here a lasting city*" (e), wholly occupied with the affairs of the world, stolidly vain-glorious. I live, alas ! the vile slave of the flesh, and so immoderately do I love this food of worms, that I do not blush to sacrifice to its convenience innumerable degrees of virtue and of glory. I live as unmindful of my soul, and of its future lot, as if "*the death of man and of beasts were one, and the condition of them both were equal, and man had nothing more than the beast*" (f).

(a) 1 John ii. 16. (b) 2 Kings xiv. 14. (c) Luke xii. 40.
(d) Genesis iii. 19. (e) Hebrews xiii. 14. (f) Eccles. iii. 19.

O my Lord God ! I am the food of worms, corruption, filth, and loathsome rottenness : more filthy than the mire, than corruption itself, and, nevertheless, I have dared to raise up my head in pride against Thee, the Omnipotent God. I have dared to make Thee of less account than my body ; preferring its lusts, its pride, and its avarice, to Thy most holy will. O Heavens ! for the sake of this filthy flesh, then, I have made God angry, have defiled my conscience, and have cast away grace ! Ah ! I tremble from head to foot when I think of my iniquities.

But I repent, O Lord, of my insolence ; I am ashamed of my folly. Would that my heart could burst with grief ! Yes, I have resolved to proclaim henceforward a most determined war against avarice, pride, and sensuality. Let the lightnings of heaven reduce me to ashes, sooner than I should again offend my Creator. The thought of death at length reveals to me the vanity of the world's goods. Grant to me, O Lord, freed from those three bonds which keep me fixed in the mire, the liberty of the children of God. Grant me to emulate the indifference of a dead body, which permits itself to be moved to any side ; equally pleased whether it be clad in purple or in rags, whether it be honoured or despised, whether it be placed in a plain wooden coffin or in a sarcophagus of marble.

COMPENDIUM.

I. *Death teaches us to despise worldly goods.* “*Thou shalt die the death.*” You shall certainly die ; but you know not when—how—where. Leaving behind you all that you possessed, “*thou shalt go into the*

house of thy eternity," unaccompanied—and stripped of everything. You believe all this, and yet are so much attached to wordly possessions! And you are so covetous of them, and for their sake you stray from your last end!

II. *Death teaches us to despise worldly honours.* Approach: gaze upon that corpse. See how it is despoiled of every honour! It no longer prides itself on illustrious titles; it is nothing but the loathsome food of worms—a mass of corruption—a handful of ashes from which all turn away with disgust. Go, now, and in the presence of all this rottenness, indulge in pride if you can.

III. *Death teaches us to fly from the pleasures of the flesh.* Contemplate in that corpse what will one day be the condition of that flesh through love of which you expose yourself to the risk of damnation. Come, take up that skull; handle those bones; mix those ashes together; gaze upon that creeping mass of worms. Tell me, is it not most extravagant folly on your part to have so many thoughts and so many anxieties for this handful of filth, and, meanwhile, to care nothing for the salvation of your soul?

LECTURE.

On the Knowledge of Ourselves.

I. The purgative way proposes to itself three ends: The first is *the detestation of our sins*; the second, *the extirpation of their roots*; and the third, *the knowledge of ourselves*. If a physician be ignorant of the disease from which his patient suffers, he cannot apply the suitable remedies—hence the necessity of *thy knowledge of ourselves*. If the patient love his ail-

ment, he will not seek for medicine to remove it—hence the necessity for *detesting our sins*. If the causes of the disease be not removed, a perfect restoration to health is impossible—hence the necessity for *extirpating the roots* of our sins. Since, then, it is by these helps, principally, that the soul is disposed to produce the holy fruits of every virtue, we see at once how necessary it is to begin the work, and not abandon it until it is brought to a happy conclusion. By considering on yesterday the malice of sin, and its chastisements, we have been led to *detest* it above all things. Moreover, we have made every effort to *eradicate* from our souls pride and sensuality, which are the chief roots of all vices. To-day we shall endeavour to arrive at a thorough knowledge of ourselves, in order to attain the third end which the purgative way proposes to itself. In our second meditation on yesterday, which had for its object our personal sins, and in the consideration and examen which followed it, we made considerable progress in this knowledge of ourselves. To-day, however, this object must engage our almost exclusive attention; because the more clearly we see our own nothingness, the greater motive shall we have for self-humiliation and penance, and so for eradicating from our hearts sensuality and pride, which are the two greatest impediments to the acquisition of the holy spirit of indifference, to serve God in whatever manner He shall please. For it surpasses belief, that any one should have a thoroughly profound knowledge of the *wretchedness* of his body, and the sinfulness of his soul, without, at the same time, hating and despising himself.

II. That this thorough knowledge of ourselves is

in reality the third fruit to be derived from the exercises of the first week, according to the mind of St. Ignatius, we learn from the Directory which says : “ *Therefore, the person making the Exercises should direct all his efforts to this—to know his own lowly and vile condition, and to feel it in his heart* ”

(a). S. Ignatius supplies us with three means to help us in attaining this salutary knowledge, viz. : (1) The first manner of making prayer ; (2) The examination of conscience ; (3) A general confession. The first method of prayer consists in reflecting within one’s self on the precepts of God and of the Church, on the seven deadly sins, on the three powers of our soul, and on our five senses ; examining successively, in order, whether we have observed the first, whether we have stained our souls with the second, whether we have made good use of or have abused the last. What else is this but to penetrate “ *into the bottom of the deep, and look into the heart of man, into the most hidden parts* ” (b).

It is self-evident what an efficacious help is found in the *double* examination of conscience, both daily and general (which precedes confession), to enable one to begin to open his eyes to the knowledge of the sins of his past life, and of the present state of his soul. For this is truly the living light of the lamp that “ *brings to light the hidden things of darkness* ” (c). And for this reason, from the very commencement of the Exercises, S. Ignatius proposes both of them to us, desiring that we should carefully perform the daily examen for a quarter of an hour

(a) Directory, c. xi. n. 3. (b) Ecclesiasticus xxiii. 28.

(c) 1 Cor. iv. 5.

each day, since it is the best means to search through the most secret hiding-places of our soul.

Finally, we learn from the words of the Directory, how powerful a help towards acquiring the knowledge of ourselves is to be found in a general confession, embracing either our entire life, or a considerable portion of it: "*for,*" says the Directory, "*experience has proved that it has been exceedingly useful to many in attaining a knowledge of themselves, and the amendment of their lives*" (a). Nor need this surprise us, for by recalling to mind the sins which we have committed up to the present, it is easy to discover the root in which they have their origin; the more so if we also examine with diligence what love, or hatred, or desire, or aversion, or hope, or fear prompts us to commit those faults which ordinarily form the matter of our confessions. With reason, therefore, S. Ignatius desires that, the better to arrive at this knowledge of ourselves, we should devote to the examination of conscience almost the entire of the first week, and afterwards go to confession towards its close.

III. Since S. Ignatius desires that this self-knowledge should be not only speculative but also practical, tending to the emendation of our lives, and to a detestation of sin and of its root, the Saint supplies us to this end with a most powerful help—namely, *the particular examen*. In this Exercise each person proposes to examine by itself some one particular defect, and not to rest satisfied, nor cease to combat it, until he has either totally eradicated it from his soul, or at least got it under such control, as not

(a) Directory, cap. x. n. 9.

to permit it any longer to get the mastery over him.

§ II.

To the three helps mentioned above, S. Ignatius adds also the two meditations on Death and Judgment, since there is nothing more powerful than these to make known to us the *wretchedness of our body and the sinfulness of our soul*. From the contemplation of death and judgment, we see with the greatest clearness that we are merely “*nothingness and sin*” (a), and, therefore, deserving even of our own hatred and contempt.

Truly, we can never more fully realise the wretchedness and nothingness of our body than after it has been a few days in the tomb. Ugh! what a horrible, filthy sight it is! Approach and let us examine it. At first the corpse is marked here and there with nasty, decaying spots, which in a short time assume the form of a loathsome blackness. From the face, from the breast, and from the entire body down to the very feet there oozes out a mouldy scum, accompanied by a noisome, musty smell, both forerunners of the corruption which is setting in, and which soon after, when the skin is burst, spouts out and flows over in all directions, until the very limbs seem to swim in it. From this corrupt matter, which partly flows on the exterior, and partly seethes within, there is generated an immense quantity of worms. These greedily devour the decomposing flesh, and, as they feast upon it, it is

(a) Concil. Uransican.

horrible to see how they swarm over the decaying mass, how they turn and twist themselves in all directions, how they jump in and out through the sockets of the eyes, how they disgorge themselves from the nostrils and mouth, and swim and plunge in that seething lake of corruption. Ugh ! even to picture it in imagination makes one shudder !

II. Come hither, O mortal, gaze upon this "*pit of misery and mire of dregs*" (a). Contemplate those filthy pieces of flesh. Here *know thyself*, here see *who thou art*. That great creeping mass of worms was once your body, the idol of your self-love, which you fondled so tenderly, and which you caused to swim in an ocean of delights. Those hideous holes in that skull indicate the places where once were your eyes, your nostrils, and your mouth—the instruments and portals of every vice. See to what your cherished idol is reduced ! grasp that handful of bones, blow into those ashes : behold now who and what you are : see that you are but dust, a sack filled with filth, a whited Sepulchre, a sewer covered over with snow. Behold your nobility ! O what a powerful means the consideration of death is, to make known to us our own misery and our own nothingness !

III. To meditate upon the *judgment* which will be passed upon us immediately after death is of no less efficacy in leading us to a knowledge of ourselves. This shall form the subject of our second meditation to-day, and it will show us, as in a mirror, the *sinfulness and nothingness of our soul*, making known to us—1, its depravity ; 2, its incli-

(a) Psalm xxxix. 3.

nation to every evil ; 3, its impotence to perform, of itself, anything that is good.

1. First of all, to speak of the soul's *depravity*, the soul ought, indeed, to be the image of the most Holy Trinity, the living temple of God, the mirror of holiness reflecting the light of every virtue. But so far from this being the case, alas! what a different tale there is to tell! The *memory*, like some vast lake, is filled with most filthy images, vain fancies, and sinful representations, which ever float upon it, and are continually agitated by our own passions, and by the devil, the enemy of our souls. The *intellect* represents nothing but error, blindness, and darkness, and is the dwelling-place where false maxims, deceits, ignorance, and rash judgments find a sure abode. A sinful disposition rules like a queen in the *will*, making it the slave of those depraved inclinations, through which it performs, not the good which it desires, but the evil which it abhors.

Moreover, there reigns in the soul an evil *inclination* which ever draws it towards sin ; so much so, that if God's grace did not restrain it by a merciful violence, it would plunge into the abyss of every crime. To form a faint idea of it, imagine that you see a man held by the hair of his head over a fearful pit, all ablaze with sulphur and pitch, and in this you have a very feeble picture, indeed, of man's inclination towards sin, and of God's sustaining power, which alone prevents him from falling into it. The soul not only has an inborn propensity to evil, it is, moreover, of itself, incapable of performing aught that is good. For, without preventing grace and the supernatural aid of God, it cannot produce any

supernatural act, nor can it produce even a natural act without God's natural assistance. Wherefore, it is true to say of the soul, that it is *nothing*. 1. In its *essence* ; since its existence depends entirely on its Creator, and were He to withdraw, even for a moment, His preserving hand, it would lapse again into its original nothingness. 2. It is nothing in its *operations* ; because without the physical concurrence of God, it could not give motion even to a foot or a finger. 3. It is nothing in respect of *merit* ; because to elicit an act meritorious of life eternal, one needs must have *efficacious* supernatural grace ; that is to say, such grace, as, in God's eternal fore-knowledge, would meet with the acceptance of the human will. Now this grace is due to no one, of justice ; and, still more, no one can merit it, how worthy soever his actions may be.

Wherefore, we see how powerfully these two meditations on Death and Judgment, by placing before us the wretchedness of our *body* and the sinfulness of our *soul*, assist us in acquiring a knowledge of ourselves, or, in other words, of our own nothingness.

§ III.

These meditations have a particular efficacy also, as the Directory remarks, "*in withdrawing our mind from the inordinate love of the things of this world*" (a) ; and this is another fruit which we ought to use every endeavour to gather from them. Indeed, we have already made every effort to do so in the first meditation, striving to eradicate from

(a) Directory, ch. 15, n. 4.

our souls the appetite for riches, pleasures, and honours, and to realise to ourselves the wretchedness of our body. And, in truth, if the condition of our body is as wretched as we have seen it to be, "*why is earth and ashes proud?*" (a) If you are but a sack filled with corruption, and the food of worms, "*why doth thy heart elevate thee? why doth thy spirit swell against God?*" (b) If you are but dust and nothingness, why do you take it ill that you are despised, and that this nothingness is treated at its proper value? Having nothing to boast of, but sins and failings, why do you desire to be praised? Why do you dread to be humbled, and to be thought of small account? Being nothing but rottenness and corruption, why do you think so highly of yourself, and strive to exalt yourself beyond others? Why are you ambitious of honours, when every honour must, at length, be buried in the grave?

In the meditation on judgment, you shall see your soul torn asunder by contrary and contradictory passions. You shall find it sometimes depressed by sadness, and at another time swollen with inordinate pride; now lashed into unbridled fury, and the next moment burning with the fire of sinful love; now the prey of despondency, and again of envy; never at rest, but always tossed about at the mercy of the passions. Why then, I ask, do you think so highly of your soul, when you know that it is so sinful? Or why do you not, on the contrary, regard it with feelings of contempt, and arm yourself with a holy hatred against yourself?

(a) Eccles. x. 9.

(b) Job xv. 12, 13.

I have said, *a hatred of yourself*. What? Do you feel a difficulty in bringing yourself to hate your body—that receptacle of all filth, that sewer overflowing with everything that is unclean? Do you never reflect that it is the betrayer of your soul, a very nest of vice, the fomentor of concupiscence the seat of temptations, the enemy of virtue, an ocean ever tossed by the tempests of sin? And do you find a difficulty in hating this monster? For the same reason, do you experience a difficulty in hating your soul, that rebel against God, the foe of heaven, the servant of the passions, the mother of error, the despicable slave of the flesh? How very tender-hearted you are. Come, be strong-minded and resolute. Remember that “*he that nourisheth his servant delicately from his childhood, afterwards shall find him stubborn*” (a). Therefore “*chastise your body, and bring it into subjection*” (b), “*war against you soul*” (c); wean your affections from those silly trifles, those baubles of which death may rob you at any moment, and the love of which will cause you sorrow when you stand before God’s judgment seat. (Here form your particular resolutions, and find out what those things are from which you ought principally to detach yourself.)

II. By means of these meditations the soul is not only weaned from the love of all worldly goods, but, moreover (as the Directory observes), “*it conceives a holy fear of the Lord, and is confirmed in its hatred and detestation of sin*” (d); and this constitutes the third fruit to be gathered from this consideration.

(a) Proverbs xxix. 21.

(c) 1 Peter ii. 11.

(b) 1 Cor. xi. 27.

(d) Directory, cap. 15 & 39.

And, in truth, whoever seriously reflects that, in the very moment in which he sins, he may be surprised by death, and hurried before the judgment-seat of God to render an account of that same sin to a Judge most wise, inexorable, and most strict; who "*can destroy both soul and body into hell*" (a): who, I say, that reflects on this, can refrain from exclaiming with Joseph: "*How then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?*" (b). He would prefer to face a thousand deaths, and endure the most excruciating tortures, rather than commit sin, and offend anew the majesty of God, according to that saying of Ecclesiasticus, "*in all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin*" (c).

These, then, are the three fruits to be gathered from the meditation of Death and Judgment, and which all belong to the first week of the Exercises, viz.: 1. The detestation of sin. 2. The knowledge of ourselves. 3. The extirpation of the root of sin; detaching our soul from the things of this world, and principally from the desire of pleasures and of honours, which are the primary source of all sin, and the principal obstacle which the soul has to encounter in its onward progress towards perfection. The parable of the prodigal son, applied practically to ourselves, will be found of much advantage towards attaining this object.

By means of this meditation, the soul, while considering the wretchedness of that poor spendthrift, arrives at *the knowledge of itself*: "*I here perish with hunger*". It next proceeds to *detest sin*: "*Father, I have sinned*". Finally, like the prodigal, it hurls

(a) Matt. x. 28. (b) Gen. xxxix. 9. (c) Eccles. vii. 40.

aside all obstacles, bursts the fatal chains that bind it, and plucks out *the root of sin* : “ *I will arise, and will go to my Father*”. From this we perceive that the concluding meditation of the first week’s exercises is, as it were, the final impulse given to the soul on the road to perfection ; so that, all impediments being removed, it may come to the determination of returning to its last end, from which it had strayed by sin, and of serving God in whatsoever manner He may wish, being, for its own part, perfectly indifferent to all things.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Particular Judgment.

FIRST POINT.

“ *We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ*” (a). This sentence admits of no limitation, therefore you, also, must present yourself before that dread tribunal, “ *for every one shall bear his own burden*” (b). Here you shall be judged by a most wise Judge, who cannot be influenced by any entreaties, whose investigation into your conduct will be most searching, and who has been very much irritated by your sins. “ *He will reprove thee, and set before thy face*” (c) all the

(a) 2 Cor. v. 10. (b) Gal. vi. 5. (c) Psalm xlix. 21.

sins committed during your life-time, through means of your five senses, through the three powers of your soul, in thought, in word, and in deed; for "*all things that are done, God will bring to judgment, for every error, whether it be good or evil*" (a); and "*every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment*" (b). In a word, all your actions shall be subjected to a most rigid examination; all of them, without a single exception.

1. This examination will embrace *all the faults committed* in violation of the precepts of the Decalogue and of the Church, by the seven deadly sins, by the violation of vows, by sins against God, against our neighbour, and against ourselves; nay, even our hidden sins, and those of which we have quite lost all remembrance, shall be inquired into. Alas! how you shall then see yourself clothed all over with sin! sins of different species, countless in number, heinous beyond expression, and of indescribable malice.

2. Moreover, *the good that has been omitted* will form the subject of investigation. Oh! how terrified you will be, when you are startled by that dread summons: *count, weigh, divide!* Count up the graces that have been lavished upon you during the course of your life O God! how numerous these are! Weigh their price in the balance of the sanctuary. . . . Ah! it is beyond calculation; it is infinite. Reckon separately the good and bad use which you have made of them. . . . Alas how very much the latter surpasses the former,

(a) Eccles. xii. 36.

(b) Matt. xii. 36.

Oh, how many are the obligations of your state unfulfilled, how many the duties of your office which you have neglected, how many the means of salvation which you have passed by heedlessly, how many the opportunities of doing good which you have slighted.

3. Poor wretch ! what will be your feelings when the Divine Judge shall exclaim, with a voice of thunder : Render to me an account of the *time* so liberally granted to you to do penance, to increase your store of grace, and to merit glory ; time which you have recklessly squandered, either in idleness or in doing something else besides that which you were ordered to do, or, perhaps, in the commission of sin. Give an account of the *talents* entrusted to you, and which you either buried because you were too indolent to use them, or which you have impiously profaned by their abuse. Give an account of the many confessions, the communions, the meditations, and the retreats, which you have either omitted, or have performed in a careless manner, and without deriving any fruit therefrom. Give an account of the many sins which you might have hindered, of the many souls which you might have saved, of the many pious practices which you might have diffused among the people. Alas ! O Lord ! “ *shame hath covered my face* ” (a), “ *for my soul is filled with evil* ” (b).

4. Finally, before that dread tribunal there shall be an inquiry even into *our good actions which have been badly performed ; for God will search Jerusalem*

(a) Psalm lxviii. 8.

(b) Psalm lxxxvii. 4.

with lamps" (a), and even "*will judge justices*" (b). Alas! when the Eternal Judge shall examine our good actions, "*all our justices shall be as the rag of a menstruous woman*" (c); and S. Gregory says, "*our justice, when examined by Divine Justice, will be found to be injustice; and under the rigid examination of the Judge, those things will be found blamable, which in our estimation were most praiseworthy*" (d).

In that terrible hour, even our very best actions will be found faulty, either because of the manner in which they were performed, or of the motive which prompted them, or of the end which we had in view when carrying them out. Even the man who considers that he is rich in merits, shall then discover that he is "*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" (e). Here, then, once for all, know thyself O how very suitable is the meditation of Judgment to discover to us the sinfulness of our soul! and what a powerful incitement is this knowledge towards a profound humiliation of ourselves, a detestation of sins, and a hatred of ourselves!

SECOND POINT.

Not only shall we be arraigned on all these counts, but they shall be put before us *distinctly*, and with all possible precision; for God "*searcheth the reins and heart*" (f), and He "*will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the*

(a) Sophonias i. 12.

(c) Isaias lxiv. 6.

(e) Apoc. iii. 17.

(b) Psalm lxxiv. 3.

(d) Lib. v. moralium, cap. vi.

(f) Apoc. ii. 23.

counsels of the hearts" (a). That eye which penetrates even the intentions and the thoughts of men, will make a most minute examination of our soul, fully disclosing its secret inclination towards evil, and its natural inability to perform aught that is meritorious. Before this tribunal, the *number* of our sins will be calculated with the most scrupulous exactness, their *species* will be distinguished, the precise degree of *guilt* involved in them will be weighed in an unerring balance, and their *heinousness* will appear in most unmistakable colours. One by one, Almighty God will inquire into every feeling of our soul, and will discover the many sources from which our failings have sprung. One by one, He will hold up before our face the silly fancies we harboured, the groundless pretensions we have cherished, the false and seductive maxims which regulated our every act. In a word, on that terrible day, you shall see, as in a panorama, the story of your life year by year; the opportunities which lay within your grasp of obtaining perfection, and of cultivating the spirit of piety, the powerful impulses of grace which you have experienced, the remedies placed within your reach whenever you chanced to fall, the continuous, unbroken chain of graces which were ever at your command, and which you have always abused.

With such knowledge before you, what would you think of the malice of sin? What of that insatiable thirst of yours for honours and pleasures? What of those baubles which you love so much? In what state of life would you choose to live, and how

(a) 1 Cor. iv. 5.

would you wish to have served the Lord in the state already chosen. What, think you, will then be your esteem for the principle of indifference to every place, to every office, and to all conditions of health—a principle so often inculcated. Oh! how very different will your opinions then be! “*Then the poor and humble will have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side. Then every devout person will rejoice, and the irreligious will be sad. Then the flesh that has been mortified shall triumph more than if it had been always pumpered in delights. Then the contempt of riches shall weigh more than all the treasures of worldlings. Wherefore, learn at present to suffer in little things, that then thou mayst be delivered from more grievous sufferings*” (a). Humble yourself, therefore; chastise your flesh, and do what, if left undone, may hereafter cause you to weep bitter tears of fruitless penance.

THIRD POINT.

On that day of wrath and unrelenting justice, not only will all things be examined separately, and on their merits, but the accused will have no chance of flight, no escape from the Judge’s sentence. The time for pleading excuses has passed by: every gate which mercy might hold open is for ever closed against the sinner. And, in truth, even you yourself must needs confess that “*you are inexcusable*” (b). Should you dare put forward *ignorance* as your excuse, the dogmas of Faith in which you believed will convict you of a lie. Should you plead your

(a) “Imitation of Christ,” book I. ch. 24. (b) Rom. ii. 1.

natural *impotence* to do good as a palliation of your crimes, then will rise up against you the many graces which were within your reach. You may, perhaps, say that the path of virtue is a *difficult* one to tread; but, then, there are the words of Jesus Christ: "*My yoke is sweet, and my burden light*". You may, perhaps, plead in excuse your tender age, or your delicate constitution, but from the east and from the west there shall rise up in judgment against you persons of the same age, and of a constitution equally delicate; and the example of what they have done will be your strongest condemnation.

Even your angel guardian, becoming your adversary, will cry out, "You might have become a saint if you only wished it. You might and you ought to have become one." Your damnation is of your own choosing. By-and-by the demons, while they mock you, will explain to you both sides of the question, holding up before you on the one side, Faith, and what it prescribes—on the other, your life, the while they say, "See, this is what you believed, and yet you have acted thus. Behold, this is the charter of your Faith, and this the picture of your life. These are the laws for the regulation of your conduct, and this your observance of them."

Tears and entreaties shall then be useless, for there will be no longer time for showing mercy. It will be of no avail to repent of sins past, nor to form resolutions against sins in the future, for the hour of repentance has gone by. Then "*time shall be no longer*" (a). Not even will it be permitted you to fly for succour to Mary, because in that night of

(a) Apoc. x. 6.

blackest darkness "*the moon shall not shed her light*" (a), but your sentence shall come, quick, inevitable, and irrevocable, deciding your fate for eternity. O judgment! O dread sentence!

AFFECTIONS.

1. *Of dismay.* "Alas! wretch that I am: when will the day of judgment arrive, and the books be opened that disclose the secrets of hearts! When it shall be said to me, '*there is the man, and these are his acts*'. What shall I then do, O Lord, when the heavens shall make my iniquity manifest, and the earth shall rise up against me? In very truth, I have nothing to reply, but, my head bowed down in shame and confusion, I stand before Thee abashed.'

2. *Of fear.* O dread moment! which I can never escape, and which may, perhaps, come upon me very, very soon. What a torturing crisis!—on the one hand are arrayed my sins, which stand as my accusers; and on the other I see suspended the sword of Divine Justice, which threatens me with vengeance; beneath my feet I behold the terrible pit of hell prepared to swallow me up; above me I see a Judge justly enraged; within me I feel the stings of a conscience reproaching me with my manifold faults. Alas, where shall I hide myself! how shall I appear! To hide myself is impossible—to appear is a torture beyond endurance! Who is it that will not awake at those terrible words, "*Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!*" Ah! "*Thou thunderest forth over my head thy judgments, O Lord, and thou shakest all my*

bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly" (a).

3. *Of grief.* Alas ! my soul, what hast thou done in sinning ? You have offended that self-same God by whom you shall one day be judged. But I repent me of my transgressions ; "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to thy great mercies, and forgive my sins,*" which I abhor and detest with all my soul, because they have offended Thee who art the infinite good , and, henceforward, I purpose to avoid them, and to extirpate the roots from which they have sprung, and, in particular (N.N.)

4. *Of self-knowledge and hatred of one's self.* I know full well, O Lord, that I am but a sinner. I can see in myself nought but wretchedness and sin ; impotence for aught that is good, and a very decided propensity towards evil. My crimes are more numerous than the very hairs upon my head, and even the few virtues that I do possess have about them a something that savours of vice. Wherefore, I despise myself, and shrink back into the abyss of my own nothingness. "*O that I could but feel duly humble for my crimes*" (b). O accursed flesh, the love of which has so often led me to insult so dread a judge ! Henceforward I swear against thee undying enmity. Would that I could claim as mine that golden spirit of indifference to every occurrence, be it what it may, to every place, to every office, and to all conditions of health ! With this spirit for my guiding star, I shall henceforward serve God in the manner which pleases him best ; that I may one day be enabled to hear from Christ,

(a) "Imitation of Christ," book 3, ch. 14.

(b) S. Bernard.

my Judge, those consolatory words, "*Come, thou blessed of my Father,*" &c.

COMPENDIUM.

I. We must all needs present ourselves before the judgment-seat of God, where all our faults shall be most minutely investigated. Yes ; all of them. 1. All the sins we have committed. 2. The good that has been omitted, the graces that have been un-availed of, the opportunities squandered, the time lost, the talents ill-employed. 3. Even our good actions, when blamable, either because of the *manner* in which they were performed, or the *motive* which prompted them, or the *end* for which they were undertaken, shall form the subject of inquiry.

II. All those things shall be placed most *distinctly* before us : our sins shall be *counted* for us ; their *species* shall be distinguished ; they shall be *weighed* in an unerring balance ; and their malice shall be held up before us for ourselves to study. Even our *most hidden feelings* shall be inquired into. Our whole life will be held up before us as in a mirror.

III. *Escape* there shall be none ; neither may one plead in excuse *ignorance*, or his tender years, or his natural disposition, for there shall arise against him innumerable saints, who though circumstanced in the self-same manner, overcame all obstacles, and eventually became saints. Even your angel guardian shall become your accuser, while the Devil lays the indictment against you. Not even Mary will be your helper : *mercy there will be none*. O Judgment, how terrible thou art !

CONSIDERATION.

On the manner of preparing for Death.

Among the principal fruits to be gathered from the retreat, may also be reckoned that happy frame of mind in which one always feels himself prepared to die, without even a thought to trouble or disturb him. And, in truth, if one does not prepare for death during the time of Retreat, when will he do so? If he cannot find time during those days, when is he to find it? Most certainly he is unworthy of salvation, who, on the expiration of those days of salvation, finds himself unprepared to meet death. I submit to you a method which will assist you in doing this great work well. Set about it at once, and the peace of mind which you will afterwards experience will be your reward.

§ I. *How to receive the announcement of Death in a Christian manner.*

On your knees within your oratory, and with your crucifix in your hands, fancy that your angel guardian warns you of the approach of death, saying to you, "*Thus saith the Lord: Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live*" (a). On receiving this message, you ought to exclaim with joy, "*Behold me, O Lord, ready*". My Lord and my God, the arbiter alike of life and of death, who hast decreed that because of sin man must die, behold, I humbly submit to this thy decree: the while

(a) Isaias xxxviii. 1.

I detest, with all the powers of my soul, all the sins of which in my life past I may have been guilty. That death which I have so many times merited, I now freely accept, in the hope that this acceptance may serve in some slight degree to atone for past transgressions, and may help to bring me finally to that happy land where "Sin shall be no more".

Yes, my God; let death come to me wherever, whenever, and in what manner pleases Thee best. For my part, I am perfectly indifferent. Should your Providence decree that my death be one of painful torture, I accept the decree, and kiss your Fatherly Hand. Thy holy will be ever done? How great soever these pains may be, they will still fall far short of the torments of hell, which I have so many times deserved by my sins. The very *hatred* I bear myself would make me wish to die, that the worms might consume this flesh of mine, which has been the slave of so many sinful passions. The feeling of my own *abasement* creates within me a desire of death, that so I may return to my original nothingness, and the world thus have a happy riddance of a wretched sinner, who, casting off the mild yoke of his Creator, has strayed so far away from his last end.

§ II. *On reviewing our past life, and inquiring into the actual condition of our soul.*

Simultaneously with the announcement of death, our memory shall be flooded with the thoughts of the past, and with a painful consciousness of the actual condition of our soul. Well would it be then to have taken those thoughts to heart at the proper time!

1. Examine, then, what is at this moment the condition of your soul. Were the death-summons to come to you at this moment, would you find yourself prepared? Put this question to your own conscience, and ask yourself honestly would you think yourself prepared? Have you preserved unstained that robe of innocence which was given to you on the morning of your baptism? If you have had the misfortune to have lost it, have you again recovered it by a sincere repentance? Have you made exact and good confessions? In one word, is your soul clothed with the nuptial robe? Are you habitually in the state of grace? In the present state of your soul, would you be prepared for the death-summons? Were you this moment to get a sudden call to the other world, is there nothing that would give you trouble? Is there anything to make you anxious? . . . Ah? you hesitate about the matter! Why does your colour change? What folly then on your part to live, were it only for a moment, in a state in which you should be unwilling to die!

2. And, *what has your life been?* What were the objects which engrossed all your cares, and your every anxiety? On what did you expend your time, your labours, and your talents? Was it for Heaven, for your soul's salvation, for God? or wasn't it, perhaps, for the world's follies; to live a life of indolence; to serve the enemy of souls? Of the many years that you have lived, has there passed a single month without a venial sin? What do I say? Has even a single day passed? Have you ever devoted to your Maker's worship even a single hour of pure, undivided service? What can you

boast that you performed for Christ's sake? Where are the sufferings that you have endured to win heaven? Have you throughout the entire term of your life performed even a single act of heroic virtue? When the hour of death arrives, are there no sins of commission or of omission to give you trouble? And when God demands from you an account of such and such acts of yours, what reply are you to give?

3. *What, at that moment, would you wish your past life to have been?* What would you wish the motive to have been which regulated your actions? What would be the state in which you would elect to serve God? or, having chosen a state, how would you discharge its obligations? Reviewing, at that moment, your past life, would you repent that you had spent it in practices of devotion? or, would you approve of the life which you are leading at present? At that dreadful moment, of what avail will it be to have gratified the senses and our sensual inclinations? . . . and to have enjoyed to the full all the good things of this life? How will it avail you that you enjoyed positions of eminence? . . . And, on the other hand, what hurt would it then be to you, if your life had been passed in bad health, in poverty, in a lowly and abject state? Ah! at the hour of death our greatest torture shall be to have lived a tepid life; and our greatest consolation will be found in the consciousness that our past life has been one of toil, endured for God's sake, and for our own souls.

4. *How will you die?* Does that ever-varying fluctuation of yours between good and evil, between fervour and tepidity, warrant you in hoping for the grace of final perseverance? Death is but an echo

of life ; and it would, therefore, be little short of a miracle to end a tepid life by a holy death. Have you any well-founded motive for hoping that you shall escape that last temptation which your great enemy will employ in your last agony in order to ruin your soul ? Have you no cause to fear that your predominant passion, if not extirpated in time, may not furnish the devil with a weapon to assault you at the hour of death ? What particular merit can you lay claim to ? Have you performed exercises of penance to cancel the evil that you have done ? Do you expect that you shall escape the flames of purgatory ? . . . Weigh these matters attentively, and write out your resolutions in a special paper. Oh ! you shall exclaim with Thomas à Kempis : “ *How happy and prudent is he, who strives to be such now in this life, as he desires to be found at his death* ” (a).

§ III. *On the spiritual reception of the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Ūction.*

After having detested your sins with your entire soul, and having resolved rather to endure a thousand deaths than ever offend God again by sin, imagine to yourself that the holy viaticum is brought into your chamber, and, prostrated before it with all possible humility, receive it spiritually into your bosom. Then, making the sign of the cross on your five senses, which are usually anointed with the holy oil, say with devotion : “ *Through this holy unction, and his most gracious mercy, may the Lord pardon me whatever sins I have committed through my sight ✠, through my hearing ✠, through my smell ✠,*

(a) Imitation of Christ, Book i. ch. xxiii.

through my taste and tongue ✠, through my touch ✠, and through the pleasures ✠ of the flesh. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

You should, at the same time, elicit acts of sorrow for the sins which you may have committed by means of these senses, and you should offer to God, in expiation for them, all that Jesus Christ suffered in each of His senses. Finally, you should petition with the greatest fervour for a full remission of all your faults, and of the punishment which you have merited by them ; and lastly, for the gift of final perseverance.

§ IV. *On the spiritual recommendation of your soul to God.*

Imagine that your life has been despaired of by the physicians ; that you are just entering upon your last agony ; that the priest has placed in your hands the crucifix and lighted candle, and that you hear sounding in your ears that terrible command : "*Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world.*" Wherefore, placed between two eternities—the one of happiness, the other of misery—be afraid and tremble.

And yet, "*why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me ? Hope in God (a),* who both knows how to rescue you, and who can and will save you ; for no matter how heinous your sins may be, they will always fall short of His mercies. He is a Father who pities the weakness of His children, who knows our frailty, and whose "*tender mercies are over all his works (b).*" And, in truth, will He,

(a) Psalm xli. 6, 7.

(b) Psalm cxliv. 9.

who gave up His own beloved Son, deny us heaven? Ah, whoever entertains a doubt of His mercy wounds the very pupil of His eye. Add to this, that you "*have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just*" (a). His wounds shall plead in your behalf. Of His own accord He has made you a present of His blood and merits. When you present at the divine judgment-seat this price of your ransom, you are thereby paying more than you really owe. Behold your crucified love who bends down His head to embrace you; His arms are stretched out to encircle you; He opens to you the asylum of His heart. Wherefore, have a hope in Him; and with your glance, fixed upon the crucifix, break out with all the affection of your heart into the following acts of virtue.

I believe in Thee, Eternal Truth; *I humble* myself before Thee, since I am nothing; *I repent* of having offended Thee, Infinite Goodness; *I am resolved* to die rather than again commit even a venial sin; *I have hope* in Thee, because of Thy mercy, pardons, grace and glory; *I love* Thee above all things, my crucified Love; *I thank* Thee for the favours which Thou hast showered down upon me during the course of my life. Take me to Thyself—Thou who art my only *desire* and my last end. Into thy hands I commit my spirit. Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

§ V. *Affections of the soul after death.*

Having elicited these acts of virtue, imagine that you have already breathed your last, and, after aban-

doning this world, have already passed into the house of your eternity—that you have appeared before the judgment-seat, and have been condemned to the flames of purgatory. Hereupon examine yourself briefly.

1. When your soul shall have left your body, and, after abandoning everything, shall have arrived in the other world, how will you then regard the body, and those baubles which you prized so much? How will you then wish to have treated the former? and what value will you place upon the latter? What opinion will you form of honours, and of indifference to all things?

2. On your first entry into those flames, what estimate will you form of the malice of venial sin? of voluntary penance? and of the desire of perfection? Tell me, how will it avail you then to have enjoyed in this world all the conveniences of life, and thus to have increased the flames of your purgatory? On the other hand, what loss will it have been to you to have lived poor, despised, and afflicted, if thus you have escaped, or at least diminished those most bitter pains?

3. If, after death, you were permitted to return again to life, and your angel guardian were to announce to you, that at the expiration of a month you were to die a second time, what kind of life would yours be during that month? What kind of life! Consider these things a little; and, renewing your good resolutions, live, henceforward, as a man would who had returned to life, and who, having passed through the ordeal of judgment and purgatory, must die again at the end of a month. *“Blessed is that servant whom when his lord shall come, he shall*

find so doing. Amen, I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods" (a).

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Prodigal Son.

FIRST POINT.

(1) CONSIDER how the prodigal son, having received the portion of his inheritance, travelled into a far-off land; and in connection with this fact three points demand our attention, viz.: 1. The place whence he sets out; 2. The place to which he goes; and, 3. The motives which impelled him to take this step. And, first of all, why does he abandon the best of fathers, who loved him with the most affectionate tenderness; his father's house, in which he enjoyed every comfort in abundance; his familiars and friends, by whom he was greatly respected and intensely loved? (2) Leaving all these he sets out for a far-off land, of which he knew nothing, and which was very distant from the country of his birth. (3) And this he did, actuated solely by pure petulance, folly, and waywardness; because he was unwilling to live any longer in that place, in that office, and in that state which his father had appointed for him; that is, beneath the paternal roof, in the society of an obedient brother, and employed in domestic occupations. But, alas! how many calamities befell him because of this conduct!

Apply this parable to yourself, and you will find it founded in fact ; for every mortal sin is a separation and a withdrawal from God. Whenever, then, you have sinned mortally, you have abandoned God—God, your most loving, provident, and most liberal Father ; the centre of all happiness and glory ; the source of all tranquillity and sweetness ; and you went, unhappy wretch ! into the state of sin, than which there can be nothing farther removed from heaven, into the abyss of all disorder, and the centre of all misery. And this you did for ah ! shame forbids me to be more explicit. So, also, you abandoned your Creator every time that you fell from a state of fervour into one of tepidity ; every time that, through the absence of the golden spirit of indifference, you have determined to live in another place, in another employment, in another state different from that which God your Creator had appointed for you. But, oh, how many afflictions and how many misfortunes have fallen to your lot because of having acted thus !

Ah ! Father of Mercy ! I, too, have reason to fear that you may say to me, as was said of old to the Israelites, “ *You have left me, and I have left you* ” (a). But remember that, though I have refused to be an obedient son to you, you nevertheless have not ceased to be my Father. Have mercy upon me then, and with the bonds of love draw back into your loving bosom me a prodigal.

SECOND POINT.

Consider the Prodigal Son going forth to herd the swine (b) ; 1. Poor and naked, “ *he began to be in*

(a) 2 Paralip xii. 5.

(b) Luke xv.

want ;” 2. He is dying of starvation : “ *I here perish with hunger ;*” 3. Abandoned by all those on whom he had squandered his fortune, “ *he cleaved to one of the citizens of that country ;*” 4. But this man also treated him cruelly, “ *and he sent him into his farm to feed swine*”. Behold in all this the condition of that soul which abandons its Creator by mortal sin, and recedes from Him by venial sin, falling from its fervour into a state of tepidity.

For, such a soul also squanders its substance, namely, grace, time, and talents, by living, if not “riotously,” at least in a manner far from religious. Wherefore she, too, is (1) *poor and naked* : naked, because despoiled of the robe of grace ; poor, because deprived of the heavenly lights and assistance ; and she is, moreover, wounded by robbers from hell. (2.) She, also, *perishes with hunger* : she feels a dislike for the heavenly manna, namely, meditation and the Holy Eucharist, which is the bread of angels ; she abhors those exercises of piety which maintain the vigour of the soul, and prefers, instead, to be nourished with vetches and acorns ; that is, with vile, sensual pleasures. (3.) She too, is abandoned, scoffed at, and betrayed, by those very persons, through love of whom she had offended her Creator ; by a just law of retribution, that she who abandoned her Creator for the sake of creatures, is by them abandoned in turn. (4.) Finally, she is cruelly tyrannized over by those self-same passions which she served so blindly. Nay, more, like the Prodigal Son, “ *She would fain have filled herself with the husks the swine did eat : and no man gave unto her ;*” so the pleasures through love of which she left the Supreme Good, will in their turn deny themselves

to that soul, or shall be withdrawn from her, or shall become bitter instead of sweet, either because of the nausea which a surfeit produces, or because of the remorse of conscience which accompanies them. O truly deplorable and unhappy state !

How much more happily in his father's house lived the son that was obedient, than did the spend-thrift prodigal in his wanderings ! The latter suffered much greater wretchedness in striving to live at his pleasure, and according to the dictates of his appetite, than he would have to endure under the paternal roof, in the service of his father. In the same manner, fervent souls who walk in the paths of virtue, obedient to grace, meet with far less trouble than falls to the lot of those lax persons who yield to the dictates of nature, and travel on the road of tepidity. *"They that fear the hoary frost, the snow shall fall upon them"* (a); and, *"He shall flee from weapons of iron, and shall fall upon a bow of brass"* (b).

THIRD POINT.

Consider the Prodigal's return to his father. Three motives prompted him to take this step. 1. The remembrance of his past happiness, and of the abundance of his father's house : *"How many hired servants,"* he says, *"in my father's house abound with bread."* 2. The picture of his present wretchedness, *"I here perish with hunger"*. 3. The consideration of his excellent father's forgiving disposition : *"I will arise, and will go to my father"*.

These three motives, if well considered, will persuade you also to return sincerely to God, and to walk in the path which conducts towards your last

(a) Job vi. 16.

(b) Job xx. 24.

end. These are:—1. The *memory of the happiness* which you enjoyed in those years during which, while serving your Creator with fervour, you experienced an ineffable peace, and a holy, heavenly joy. 2. *The comparison between the wretchedness* of your present state of tepidity, and the blessedness of your former state of fervour. 3. The consideration of the Divine goodness, which graciously recalls the erring sinner to the right path; patiently waits for him when he delays; and, finally, on his return, lovingly embraces him, and clothes him with the splendid robe which he had at one time worn.

Read the Gospel narrative, and there you will admire the clemency of this loving father: “*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him . . . and running to him* (behold the readiness of his mercy) *fell upon his neck, and kissed him* (see in this the tenderness of his affection) . . . *and he said to his servants. Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him. and put a ring on his hand* (behold the fulness of grace) . . . *and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry*” (see the greatness of his joy), Luke xv. Wherefore, let this *ready, tender, full, and joyful* readiness to pardon, on the part of so good a Father, be for you a powerful incitement to return repentant to the bosom of His mercy

AFFECTIONS.

One ought to burst forth into those same affections to which that unhappy prodigal gave expression in presence of his offended parent:—1. Of more intense *grief* for past sins: “*Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee*”. I have deserved a thousand times to be hurled into hell, yet, notwithstanding, you

not only pardon me, but of your own accord you invite me to return to your arms. You, best of Fathers, are the first to rush into the embraces of the worst of sons; you open out your arms to receive me; you bend down to kiss me; you clothe me again with the robe of grace which I had so impiously cast aside; you adorn me once more with the ring of love which I had so perfidiously flung from me; nor yet are you satisfied; you prepare a banquet for me, at which the Bread of Angels, the Holy Eucharist, will renew my wasted strength.

O Mercy, truly infinite! I am no longer able to resist such goodness! Behold me returned to you. You will not reject in his hour of repentance the poor sinful castaway whom you have so long and so patiently waited for, and whom you have so lovingly invited to return. Alas! alas! I have offended Thee; I have offended my Father, . . . and what a father! . . . and with what heinous guilt! Ah, who shall grant me an immense, an infinite sorrow!

2. We should elicit an act of *efficacious horror* of future sins. Already has my resolve been taken; I, too, with the Prodigal Son, "*will arise and will go to my Father*". I will burst the chains of my vices; I will return to my Father. I call upon heaven and earth to be witnesses of this resolution. I will return to Thee, O my God, firmly determined to serve Thee henceforward in whatsoever Thou shalt command, and in a spirit of most absolute indifference.

3. *An act of humility*, joined to a detestation of pride, which is the main root of all evils. "*I am no longer worthy to be called thy son.*" Ah! I shall cry out with St. Bernard, "*How shall I, who am so bad a son, dare to lift up my face to so good a Father?*"

I am a sinner ; not only unworthy to be respected, praised, and placed in positions of honour and eminence, but deserving above all men every possible insult and disgrace.

4. Of *hatred of one's self*, by detesting sensuality, as being the second great source of sin : "*Make me as one of thy hired servants*". I hate and abominate self-love, which, by inducing me to abandon the most amiable of Fathers, caused me to squander my substance in a far-off land. I hate myself also, for, considered in relation to that moment in which I sinned, I am the eternal object of my Creator's hatred. My resolution is already formed ; I will take vengeance upon, and will punish myself ; and, therefore, there is no labour, no pain, no trouble, no calamity, which I am not ready to endure, provided I may in this manner appease the Divine Justice.

5. An act of *knowledge of ourselves*. O Lord, I am that prodigal son who has abandoned thee ; I see my life painted in your parable ; and that flight, those vices, that poverty, that starvation, are the true pictures of my soul when separated from Thee, and deprived of your grace. But, behold, I return ; Father receive me, and heal my many miseries.

COMPENDIUM.

I. The prodigal son, having received his portion, travels into a far-off country. Here consider : 1. From whom does he depart ?—From a father who loves him ? 2. Whither does he go ?—Into a distant and unknown land. 3. Why ?—Through pure waywardness. Apply the parable to yourself, and you will find it founded on fact. 1. You abandoned God, the fountain of all good. 2. You turned to

sin, the source of all evil. 3. And this you did, for what? I blush even to think of it.

II. Consider the prodigal son employed in herding swine. 1. He is poor and naked. 2. Is dying of hunger. 3. Is abandoned by those very persons on whom he squandered his property. 4. Is cruelly treated by the master whom he served. Behold in this the picture of a soul which by sin withdraws from God. 1. She loses grace. 2. Has a loathing for spiritual things, and pines away through want of them. 3. She is abandoned by those very persons to please whom she sinned. 4. She is cruelly treated by those very passions to which she was a slave. How happy would she have been if she had served her Father as an obedient child.

III. Consider the return of the prodigal to his father. To this he was impelled: 1, by the remembrance of his past happiness; 2, by the sight of his actual wretchedness; 3, and by the consideration of his father's mercy. Do you be likewise moved: 1, by the remembrance of your happiness when you were fervent; 2, by the picture of your misery in your present state of tepidity; 3, and by the consideration of the Divine mercy.

Fourth Day.

TO THE READER.

After detesting our sins and returning with the prodigal son to the bosom of God, our Father, we promised to serve Him in whatsoever way he shall command. Being, however, ignorant of the way in which we ought to walk, and not knowing the manner in which we ought to carry his wishes into execution, we need some guide to follow, and some exemplar to serve for our imitation.

This is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ, to imitate whom we are incited in the following meditation. The fruit to be gathered from it is a desire to serve God henceforward, in imitation of Jesus Christ, in whatever manner He shall make known to us in the course of these exercises.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Kingdom of Christ.

FIRST POINT.

It is just that we should follow Jesus Christ. I. Be cause of *the dominion* which He has over us. This

dominion He possesses (1) *by right of conquest*, for we are "*a purchased people*" (a), conquered by Him, when by his death He overthrew the empire of hell; (2) *By right of purchase*, for "*the Lord bought us*" (b) at the price of all His blood; (3) *By right of donation and inheritance*, for "*the Father hath given all things into his hands*" (c), and "*hath appointed him heir of all things*" (d); (4) *By right of election*, through which He has elected us to be His servants and clients; and we have elected Him for our King and Captain, by renouncing in baptism the devil, the world, and the flesh; and, still more, by binding ourselves to him by solemn vow in religion. So that He might address to each one of us the words spoken by Moses to Israel: "*Thou hast chosen the Lord . . . to be thy God, and to walk in his ways . . . and the Lord hath chosen thee to be his peculiar people*" (e). And are we, after considering all these things, still doubtful whether we ought to follow the footsteps of this Lord to whom we are bound by so many ties? . . . It is, indeed, most just that we should fight under such a Captain.

II. Moreover, it is just that we should follow Jesus Christ, because of *the conditions* which He offers us. For, He will share with us all the inconveniences of the war—the food, the clothing, the labours, the watchings, the battles and the wounds. Nay more: He will be Himself the first to encounter the dangers, the first to smooth down obstacles, the first to bear the brunt of the fight. The victory shall be certain, the triumph splendid, the glory immortal

(a) 1 Pet. ii. 9. (b) 2 Pet. ii. 1. (c) John iii. 35.

d Heb. i. 2.

(e) Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

What can be more just than this? Can we imagine any motive more powerful to persuade us to follow Him?

III. Finally, it is just that we should imitate this King, because of the twofold *end* which He has in view. (1) The first is *the glory of God*, to be promoted by the extirpation of vice and the practice of virtue; "*that the Father may be glorified in the Son*" (a); and since this glory is the sole object of all the operations of the most holy Trinity, its excellence surpasses everything that is not God. (2) The second is *the happiness of man*: "*for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (b). Since this happiness is substantially the same as that which God Himself enjoys, that is to say, infinite and eternal, it follows that it is of inestimable value. From which we see that it is impossible to imagine an end more useful and more sublime than this. Who, therefore, after weighing these reasons, will doubt that it is most just to follow Jesus Christ? Yes, O Lord, it is indeed but too just that I should follow Thee: "*As the Lord liveth, and as my Lord the King liveth: in what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord, my King, either in death, or in life, there will thy servant be*" (c).

SECOND POINT.

To follow Jesus Christ is *an honour* to us. I. Because of *the excellence of our Captain*. For He is "the Lord of every principality, and of every power; the King of glory; the Image of God, and the Figure

(a) John xiv. 13. (b) Luke xix. 10. (c) 2 Kings xv. 21.

of his substance ; in whom are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom ; in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells corporally ; to whom is given every power in heaven and on earth ; at whose name every knee is bent in heaven, upon earth, and in hell". And will you refuse to follow such a leader, crying out with those rebels : "*We will not have this man to reign over us*" ? (a) Far from me, O Lord Jesus, be such perfidy. "*Thou art my Lord and my God.*" To accompany Thee is the highest honour which could be conferred upon me.

II. *The excellence of the service* increases this honour. For those who serve God (1) become kings ; since to serve Him is to reign. (2) Nay, more, they become gods, according to those words of the Psalmist, "*you are gods*" (b). (3) They become the friends, children, and heirs of God : "*You are my friends*" (c), "*and all of you the sons of the Most High*" (d), "*and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him*" (e). What can there be more glorious ?

And, in truth, all the majesty of all the monarchs of the earth, when compared with this sublime slavery, is vileness, littleness, and abjection. "*It is great glory to follow the Lord*" (f). O mortals, reverence this oracle of God—" *It is great glory to follow the Lord.*" God Himself has said it, and God does not lie. Therefore, "*let us not stain our glory*" (g) by flying from the cross, which is the standard of Christ.

(a) Luke xix. 27.

(c) John xv. 14.

(e) James ii. 5.

(g) 1 Macch. ix. 10.

(b) Psalm lxxxix. 6.

(d) Psalm lxxxix. 6.

(f) Eccles. xxiii. 38.

THIRD POINT.

To follow Jesus Christ is *easy* and *pleasant*—(1) Because of the *road* where He Himself goes before us. (2) Because of the *assistance* which He gives us. (3) And because of the *companions* who share our journey. For, whosoever generously follows his footsteps in the path of virtue, finds that, by a wonderful change, "*the crooked ways are made straight, and the rough ways plain*" (a). Lifted up by Divine grace, they no longer walk but fly along the most direct paths, and animated by their companions they fight bravely where all, endued with equal courage, are marching towards the same goal.

Taught by experience, they know clearly that the ways of the world are more difficult than those of Jesus Christ, and that there are more troubles involved in a life of tepidity, than in one of fervour. The aid of grace smoothes down every difficulty, and sweetens every bitterness. Even the one thought—"*those men and women around me have been able to do it*"—lightens and removes every difficulty. O how sweet are the ways of Jesus! "*His ways are beautiful ways*," because of the pleasantness of virtue, "*His yoke is sweet*" because of the unction of grace, "*and his burden light*" (b) because of the society of our companions. And will you, indolent Christian, refuse to travel upon this road, to take this yoke upon you, to carry this burden? And will you refuse it in that company in which so many heroes, even with the sacrifice of their lives, proclaimed that

(a) Luke iii. 5.

(b) Matt. xi. 30.

to serve Jesus Christ is easy and pleasant? Ah, abject soul! unworthy the name of Christian!

Suppose (and this is the comparison which S. Ignatius makes) that you were in the presence of a magnanimous, generous, powerful, brave, and kind monarch, who kindly invited you to follow him to the conquests which he had planned to make; proposing to you such conditions only as were both easy and honourable, and swearing to you that he will lead the van in every battle-field, and will share equally with you the toil and the glory of the enterprise—tell me, would he not be a vile paltroun who should refuse to bear him company?

“But if we ought pay attention and respect to a summons to arms coming from an earthly monarch” (a) as S. Ignatius says, how much more does Jesus Christ deserve such homage, by reason of the dominion which He exercises over us, of the conditions which He proposes to us, and of the end which He has in view? How much more glorious is it for us to accompany this heavenly leader, who is so exalted in his person, who proposes to us such a noble service, and whose march to victory is at once so easy and so pleasant? *“Assuredly,”* S. Ignatius justly concludes, *“there is no one in his senses who would not most eagerly offer himself as a soldier of Christ,”* and give utterance to the following

AFFECTIONS.

“Behold, O supreme King and Lord of all things, I, although most unworthy, relying nevertheless on your grace and your assistance, make to you an offering

(a) De Regno Christi, part ii. punct. 1.

of myself, and place all that belongs to me at the disposal of thy most holy will, protesting before thy infinite goodness, and in presence of thy august mother Mary, and the entire heavenly court, that it is my intention, my desire, and my unalterable resolution (for thy greater glory and the good of souls) to follow Thee as closely as I can, and to imitate Thee in bearing injuries and adversity of all kinds, in true poverty, both of will and in act, if it be pleasing to your Divine majesty that I should adopt this kind of life" (a).

And, in truth, what is more just than that I should serve you to whom I entirely belong; to whom I owe, and from whom I hope for, everything; whom alone I ought to fear; without whose assistance I can do nothing? And what more glorious or happy state can there be than to serve you, whose service is a duty, whose yoke surpasses all sweetness? And, nevertheless, oh! how many times, have I said, "*I will not serve*"! How often have I, a contumacious rebel, shaken off this most sweet yoke?

Ah, I confess it, *I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost*" (b). But now I present my hands again to receive the manacles, and I bow my neck to receive the yoke: "*I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go*" (c). I will renounce the works of darkness, and will follow Thee, the light of life. Ah, only do Thou teach me to do thy will; that is, the manner in which you wish me to imitate Thee, and behold me ready to follow Thee—ready, and indifferent to everything.

(a) De Regno Christi, Part ii. punct. 3.

(b) Psalm cxviii. 176.

(c) Matt. viii. 19.

COMPENDIUM.

I. It is just that we follow Jesus Christ—1. Because of the dominion which He has over us by right of *conquest*, by right of *purchase*, by right of *donation* and *inheritance*, and finally by right of *election* both on his part towards us, and on our part towards Him: since this obligation towards our Lord arises out of our baptism.

2. Because of the *conditions* which He puts before us: for He shall share with us all the advantages and the disadvantages of the war alike: that is, not only the coarse food, the clothing, the labours, the battles, and the wounds, but also the victories, the triumph, and the glory.

3. Because of the *end* at which He aims. This end is twofold—the first is *the greater glory of God*, to be promoted by the extirpation of vice, and the practice of virtue; the second is the happiness of man: “*For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (a).

II. To follow Christ is honourable—1. Because of the *excellence* of the Captain, who is “the Lord of lords;” before whom heaven, and earth, and hell bow down in reverence. 2. Because of the *excellence* of the service; for, *to serve Him is to reign*; and his servants become his children, his friends, and his heirs: “*It is great glory to follow the Lord*” (b).

III. To follow Jesus Christ is *easy* and *pleasant*. 1. By reason of the *way*, for He himself goes before us—smoothing down every difficulty by His grace,

(a) Luke xix. 10.

(b) Eccles. xxiii. 38.

making sweet all that is bitter. 2. Because of the *assistance* which He renders to us. 3. Because of the *companions* whom He gives us to accompany us on our road.

Were an earthly monarch to invite us to accompany him to battle on the like generous conditions, who would be so cowardly as to decline the offer? And will we refuse to follow God, who holds out to us conditions infinitely more liberal?

LECTURE.

On the Imitation of Christ.

Having already detested our sins, we have proposed to God to follow Jesus Christ in *whatsoever manner* shall be pleasing to Him. This manner, however, is no other than *the Imitation of Christ*; "*for unto this are you called*," says the Apostle S. Peter, "*that you should follow his steps*" (a). And with reason: "*for He is the exemplar proposed to us by the Father, that by imitating Him we may amend and regulate our corrupt manners, and direct our footsteps into the paths of peace*" (b). And, therefore, that special, peculiar manner in which our Lord desires to be served by us consists in the imitation of Christ.

In fact, God wishes to be served in that manner which is *proper* to everyone's condition, and *necessary* for salvation; and this for Christians is no other than the imitation of Christ. For, as to serve his Creator is the proper and essential end of Man, so, to imitate Jesus Christ is the proper and essential end

(a) 1 Peter ii. 21.

(b) Directory, c. xviii. n. 2.

of a Christian ; and for this reason S. Gregory Nisenus says that "*a Christian is another Christ ;*" that is to say, one who in his life and manners represents Christ Himself—and this cannot be accomplished without imitating Him. Therefore, to imitate Jesus Christ is the *duty* and essential characteristic of every Christian.

Nay more, this imitation of Christ is in the very first degree *necessary* in order to attain our last end. For, as he shall not enjoy the kingdom of heaven who has not properly served God, neither shall he enjoy it who has not imitated Jesus Christ. He Himself has taught this doctrine, saying : "*No man cometh to the Father but by me*" (a) ; that is, as Cornelius a Lapide interprets the passage, "by imitating me". Since He alone is the way that leads to life, whosoever wishes to reach that goal "*ought himself also to walk even as he walked*" (b). Moreover, "*whom God foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son*" (c). Therefore, no one will be numbered among the elect unless he is found conformable to Jesus Christ ; and no one can be found conformable to Him who does not walk in his footsteps. Behold, then, the manner in which God wishes to be served by us.

II. This second week corresponds to the *illuminative way* ; for, as the Directory remarks, "*its end is to propose to ourselves Christ our Lord as the true way ; for Christ is the Sun of Justice which illumines every man that cometh into this world*" (d) ; and He Himself says of Himself, "*I am the way*" (e) ; "*I*

(a) John xiv. 6. (b) 1 John ii. 6. (c) Rom. viii. 29.
 (d) Directory, ch. xviii. n. 2. (e) John xiv. 6.

am the light of the world; he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (a). In the preceding meditation, S. Ignatius has led us to the resolution of following this way and this light; but, for the present, however, he merely puts before us, in a *general* way, the imitation of Christ, reserving the more *special* application of it for the meditations which are yet to come on.

§ II.

The preceding meditation is called "*The contemplation of the kingdom of Christ*," because in it Jesus Christ is represented to us as the restorer of his Father's kingdom, now for many ages devastated by Adam and his descendants; and as the meditation on the End of Man is the foundation and cornerstone of the exercises, taken as a whole, so this one may be regarded as the *foundation* of all the meditations that follow during the remaining weeks, for it is interwoven with and influences them all, and particularly that which regards the *choice* of the *method* by which we follow Christ, or, in other words, imitate Him in forming for ourselves a more perfect rule of life. From this we may perceive the necessity of the present meditation, and with what fervour we ought to apply ourselves to it, since from it depends the fruit of all the other meditations.

II. Add to this, that the meditation is excellent and sublime in itself, for three reasons: 1, because of the *matter* of which it treats; 2, because of the

manner in which it is treated ; and 3, because of the *fruit* which is gathered from it. Nothing can be more sublime than the *matter*, because, as the Directory remarks, "*it is a summary and compendium of the life and acts of Christ our Lord, in the execution of that work which the Father had given to Him to do*" (a); that is, to increase the Divine glory, and to restore fallen humanity, which were the ends for which Christ Jesus put on human nature.

The *manner* in which the subject is treated is quite in keeping with the old associations and military character of S. Ignatius, for *the comparison* is drawn from an earthly monarch summoning his subjects to the fight (b); a comparison very suitable to persuade us to follow Christ. For if one who should refuse to accompany his prince on such terms would be called a *paltroon*, how can he avoid being called at once both a *coward* and a *fool* who refuses to follow Jesus Christ, who makes him offers infinitely more generous.

Wherefore, at this comparison, every man of sound reason feels himself inflamed with courage, as was Urias, when comparing himself with his general Joab, he burst forth, in the presence of David, into the following words: "*My lord Joab and the servants of my lord abide upon the face of the earth: and shall I go into my house to eat and to drink? By thy welfare and by the welfare of thy soul I will not do this thing*" (c). Let such be our sentiments also: Jesus, my Captain, is poor, despised, and in sorrow; shall I then wish to be rich, honoured, and

(a) Directory, c. xix. n. 1. (b) Lib. Exercit. hebdom. II.
(c) 2 Reg. xi. 11.

in the midst of every delight? “*By thy welfare, and by the welfare of thy soul, I will not do this thing.*”

Finally, the *fruit* which we seek to gather from this meditation consists in exciting within ourselves an ardent desire of imitating this Divine Captain of ours, and of co-operating with him in the great end which He had in view, of glorifying his Eternal Father, and saving the lost souls of men. Now, since there is no end more sublime, or more useful, or more pleasing to God than this, it follows that, not only because of its *matter* and its *method*, but, also, because of the *fruit* to be gathered therefrom, this meditation is of the greatest import, and ought to be reflected upon with all possible fervour. It was in this meditation, principally, that S. Ignatius conceived the idea of the Society of Jesus, since it contains within itself, as in a germ, all that perfection at which the Society aims.

§ III.

For the rest, our Saviour calls all to join Him in this glorious work : namely, of restoring and extending his spiritual kingdom, by promoting, in imitation of Jesus Christ, the glory of God, by zeal for our own salvation, and that of others. I have said that He calls all of us ; for it is true of all that “*God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but unto the purchasing of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that we may live together with him*” (a) ; that is, that we should follow Him, each one, “*in the same*

(a) 1 Thess. v. 9.

calling in which he was called” (a); which is as much as to say—each one in his own state. For each one has his own especial state to which he has been called by God, since the apostle says, “*one after this manner, and another after that*” (b). One person is called to celibacy, another to a married life; one has a vocation to serve God in the ecclesiastical, another in the religious state; but we ought all, nevertheless, endeavour to imitate Jesus Christ, according to the condition of our state.

II. From this we begin to see, as the Directory well observes, the different degrees that exist in the imitation of Christ. These degrees are of various kinds; that is, of greater or less perfection, and their future reward will be greater or less, in proportion to the perfection with which they carry on the war against the enemy of our salvation. S. Ignatius enumerates some of those degrees which merit our particular attention. The first is the suppression of that rebellion which manifests itself in our flesh, in our senses, in our love of self, and of the world. The second is the endurance of labours. The third, poverty of spirit. The fourth, actual poverty in respect of the world’s goods. The fifth, fortitude in bearing with insults, and all kinds of adversity (c). And the two last-mentioned are, according to S. Ignatius, the two greater and more sublime degrees, to which those persons aspire who wish to devote themselves to the Divine service.

III. But, nevertheless, with regard to all these grades, no less than with regard to every condition

(a) 1 Cor. vii. 20.

(b) 1 Cor. vii. 7.

(c) De Regno Christi, part ii. punct. 3.

of life, place, and office, we must be entirely indifferent, keeping in view God's will alone. For, as *to serve God* after the manner which is pleasing to Him is the principal end aimed at in the first week of the Exercises, so the end of the present week is to serve God by imitating Jesus Christ in whatever state, or in the state already chosen, in whatever degree of perfection He shall wish to make known to us during the present Exercises—the safest rule in this matter being his Divine will. Wherefore (as in the meditation on the Foundation), this indifference must extend itself to four things; that is, to propose to ourselves to imitate Jesus Christ in poverty, or in abundance; in honour, or in disgrace; in health, or in sickness; during a long life, or a short one; abstaining from, or making use of, created things, only in so far as they are a hindrance or a help in paying homage to our King; and therefore, as S. Ignatius says, “we should propose to ourselves to use no other food or clothing than what we shall see used by Him, and to endure the same labours, watchings, and dangers, which we shall see endured by our Leader.”

§ IV.

I. This heroic indifference, however, should not degenerate into a state of torpor and stolid inertness, which would suffocate and destroy the active energy of our soul aiming at a higher state of perfection; but, according to the wish of S. Ignatius, it ought to be such that, while it keeps us tranquilly disposed to execute the holy will of God whenever, however, wherever, and in whatever degree pleases

Him, it should strive, nevertheless, always, and with a generous impulse, to follow Jesus Christ as closely as possible. It should desire, and firmly propose to itself, never to rest satisfied until it attains greater perfection; until it sees fully accomplished the most sublime end of procuring the greater glory of God by our own salvation and that of others. Wherefore, according to the Directory, the disposition required in a soul performing the Exercises is this, "*that, as far as in it lies, it should strive after that which is more perfect, according to the measure of God's grace and its own strength*" (a).

II. From this we clearly gather (the Directory continues to remark) "that from this point the soul already commences to prepare herself for the election of a state" (b). I say, "*to prepare herself*," and this advisedly; for since, on the one hand, the soul, having put aside every inordinate affection for created things, is indifferent to perform whatsoever it shall discover to be the will of God; and, on the other hand, it feels itself carried forward by an ardent desire to embrace what is more perfect; it is, therefore, clear that the soul is *preparing* itself to make choice of that degree of the more perfect life, in which it shall discover that God wishes to be served, and Jesus Christ to be imitated.

That this choice may have a happy result, S. Ignatius requires that those who make the Exercises of the second week, should manifest fervour and a great desire to advance farther in deliberating on a state of life, or to ascend to a higher degree of perfection in the state already chosen. I have said,

(a) Directory, ch. xix. n. 2.

(b) Ibid.

‘*fervour and desire*,’ for this is an undertaking of such a nature that, if it be not undertaken with fervour of spirit, it cannot be brought to a happy completion” (a). From which we see how grossly those persons deceive themselves, who fancy that they ought, in this second week, to relax somewhat their first fervour.

III. The soul having formed, in the past meditation, a general resolution to imitate Jesus Christ in the way of perfection, seeks this perfection in a special manner in the following meditations on the Incarnation, the Nativity, and the other principal mysteries of his life; minutely observing in what manner and in what circumstances it ought to imitate its Captain. But, since Jesus Christ, in all the acts of His life, has but waged incessant war against those three capital passions of the world—avarice, sensuality, and pride—by constantly opposing to them, poverty, sufferings, obscurity, and humiliations, we also, if we desire to follow Him, ought to keep always before our eyes those three great enemies of our perfection and salvation, in order to wage a bitter warfare against them; and we ought to allow ourselves no rest until they are not only routed and destroyed, but until, by constant practice, we shall have acquired the three opposite virtues, namely, the love of poverty, of tribulation, and of humility.

Wherefore, the ardent desire and firm resolution of following Jesus Christ in acquiring these virtues, is the fruit which we ought to gather from the past meditation. We shall succeed the better in effect-

ing this, if (as S. Ignatius desires) we do nothing else during the entire of this day but occupy ourselves with these truths, adapting the spiritual reading to the matter of the meditation, and taking care that all our thoughts during the day be directed to bring our resolutions to maturity, while we should remove from our minds all thoughts, even pious ones, which could distract us from our principal object.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Incarnation.

FIRST POINT.

The Second Person of the most Holy Trinity, who assumed human nature, teaches us to esteem, to love, and to desire *humility*, that is, self-abasement: "*Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart*" (a). And, in truth, the mystery of the Incarnation is an astounding instance of this abasement, and this principally for three reasons: 1. Because of the *union* which exists between the Word and human nature, since, on account of this union, the immortal and impassable God, "*who is strong and mighty, and the king of glory*" (b), now hears Himself called mortal, passable, "*a man of sorrows*" (c), and *the outcast of the people*" (d). By the same union, He who is "*the Being*," by essence, unites Himself

(a) Matt. xi. 29.

(c) Isaias liii. 3.

(b) Psalm xxiii. 8.

(d) Psalm xxi. 1.

eternally to our nothingness by a bond so close, that one and the same Christ is both man and God. O stupendous humiliation ! to be measured only by the infinite distance that exists between the condition of man and that of God. O my Jesus ! and shall I resent being called by others low, ignorant, imprudent, and full of defects, when God, through pure love of me, hears Himself called poor, weak, an impostor, "*a worm, and the outcast of the people*" (a).

2. The mystery of the Incarnation is a prodigy of humility, because of the *body* which the Divine Word assumed. For since the soul of Jesus Christ enjoyed, from the first moment of its creation, the beatific vision, and an equal glory being consequently due to His flesh, Christ could have united to Himself a glorious body, endowed with the four privileges of the blessed, and therefore, immortal, impassible, and subject to no miseries. He could have taken to Himself a body, robust and grown to perfect manhood, as was that of Adam at his creation. He might have assumed a merely apparent body, as He caused to happen in the cases of Raphael and Gabriel. And yet, O wonderful humiliation ! He clothes Himself, instead, with a body which is subject to all kinds of misery ; weak, delicate, in a state of infancy, and in need of the help of everyone. In order to liken himself in all things to his brethren, He came "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*" (b), renouncing His right to those marks distinctive of glory, and other prerogatives, that He might destroy the body of your pride, by "*the body of his lowness*" (c). You

(a) Psalm xxi. 7.

(b) Romans viii. 3.

(c) Phil. iii. 21.

believe all this, and yet you, dust and ashes, are proud!

3. Finally, the mystery of the Incarnation is a prodigy of humiliation, because of the *place* wherein Jesus Christ confined Himself. For "*this most wise prince, like the most tender little worm of the wood*" (a), lay concealed in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Here consider *who* and *how mighty* He is who lies concealed, and the *place* of His concealment. He who is Immensity itself, is confined for nine long months in the dark prison of His mother's womb, where, like a condemned criminal, he offers Himself to the Divine Justice, while awaiting a disgraceful death for our sake; and this He does (ye angels be astounded!) in order that we, wretched little worms, induced by His example, may moderate our innate craving for distinction; and that we may learn to live with equal pleasure should we be hid away in some corner of the world, employed in some low office, and placed in some low degree, wherein, to our thinking, our talents are not duly appreciated, and our merits held in low esteem.

O vain being, it is pride which cries into thy ear, "*Manifest thyself to the world*" (b). In another state, in another place, in another office, in a different degree of perfection, you might accomplish much more good; you have the talents to do so. Unhappy man! these are the whisperings of the infernal serpent. Be persuaded that that is not thrown away which is offered to the Lord. You have been created by God and for God, that you should serve Him, and imitate Jesus Christ in the manner which He

(a) 2 Kings xxiii. 8.

(b) John vii. 4.

desires. If it should be His wish, then, that you serve Him by following Jesus Christ in retirement, in obscurity, and in lowly and common employments; and if He is more honoured by having your talents thrown into the shade, than by having them held up to the admiration of the world, who are you that you should dare to question Him saying, “*Why dost thou so?*” (a). “*Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?*” (b).

AFFECTIONS.

O my Lord God! you come down upon earth to hide yourself beneath the humble covering of our flesh, and I with Lucifer mount up into heaven above the stars of God, and desire “*to be like the Most High*” (c). You, the Holy of holies, appear in the likeness of sinful flesh” (d); and I, who was born covered all over with sin, wish to get the reputation of sanctity. When you were in the form of God you annihilated yourself, taking upon you the form of a servant; and I, who am but dust and ashes, the dregs and off-scouring of the world, lift myself up with pride “*as if I were something, whereas I am nothing*” (e).

Be amazed, ye heavens! “*God became humble, that even thus the pride of the human race might not refuse to follow the footsteps of God*” (f); and, nevertheless,

(a) Ecclesiastes, viii. 4.

(c) Isaias xiv. 14.

(e) Galatians vi. 3.

(b) Romans ix. 20, 21.

(d) Romans viii. 3.

(f) S. Augustine in Ps. 33.

I indulge in pride. O you, who were once upon a time bright angels of heaven, and through pride have now become brands of hell-fire, I invite you yourselves to sit in judgment upon the question: tell me, since the Divine Majesty annihilated itself, is it not intolerable impudence on the part of a wretched little worm to puff itself up and swell with pride? O great God, who lovest humility! grant to me that, being at length indifferent to every place, to every office, to every degree, no matter how lowly, I may at length esteem, love, and desire that virtue which drew down the Divine Word into the womb of the Virgin Mary; the humility of His handmaid pleasing Him more than her faith, her charity, and her angelic purity.

SECOND POINT.

The Word made Flesh teaches us to esteem, to love, and to desire the trials and inconveniences of life, that is to say, mortification: "*I am in labours from my youth*" (a). The condition of Jesus, from the very moment He assumed human nature, was painful for three reasons:—1. Because of the inconveniences He had to endure in *his mother's womb*, which were certainly great, on account of the narrow limits, and the darkness of His dwelling-place, as well as the manner of His sustenance. Here, moreover, He could neither hear, nor see, nor taste anything; He could not move a hand or a foot, but he should remain constantly crippled and confined in one place.

2. The wretchedness of His condition was in-

measurably increased, inasmuch as He enjoyed *the full use of reason*. To arrive at some faint idea of this, let us imagine, with Nicodemus, what a terrible thing it would be for one already grown old "*to enter a second time into his mother's womb*" (a); and yet Jesus Christ remained there for nine months; being endowed all that time with such and so great a light of intellect, and such a clearness of judgment, that it infinitely surpassed not only that of all men, but of all the angels together. And, moreover, He suffered all these inconveniences without the slightest relief either from His blessed Mother, who was unable to assist Him, or from His Divinity, which was unwilling to do so; nay more, by a stupendous miracle, He suspended that happiness which should have come to Him from the enjoyment of the clear vision of God, in order that He might not experience the slightest comfort either in soul or body.

3. In addition, all these punishments were rendered still more bitter by *the distinct knowledge of future events* which He possessed. That a single moment of time should not pass without witnessing the most loving Saviour in suffering, His Father, from the very first instant of His life, showed to Him all the afflictions, the sorrows, the insults, and the torments which He would have to endure until the hour of His death; and He showed them to Him in a most vivid manner, one by one, with all their accompanying circumstances, in their entire weight, number and measure, just as He afterwards suffered them. And all these were fully accepted by Jesus Christ with

(a) John iii. 4.

a most ready will; and, entering into detail, he specially offered His head to be crowned with thorns, His eyes to the tears, His cheeks to the buffets, His face to the insults, His lips to the gall and vinegar, His entire body to wounds and a most cruel death. O truly insatiable desire of suffering! O effeminate companions of Jesus, how deeply the example of our Captain ought to make us blush!

The fruit to be gathered from this meditation is not only the *contempt* of honours, and the *hatred* of the pleasures and comforts of the flesh; but, moreover, the *esteem* and the *love* (at least inceptive) of contempt and trials, and an anxiety at least for the *desire* to acquire those virtues.

AFFECTIONS.

O my Jesus, in the very first moment of your entry into the world, not only did you submit to the most abject humiliation, but you, moreover, afflicted your innocent little body, by enduring all the inconveniences attendant on your dwelling in your mother's womb. And in order that you might feel the pain the more, you formed to yourself a body adapted to suffering, and united it immediately to a soul in the enjoyment of reason; in order that you should not be insensible to pain, nor feel it in a less degree, either through the imperfect organization of the body, or the want of a soul, or the absence of reason: while I, O shame! lavish delicacies upon this rebellious flesh of mine, contaminated with so many sins; I carefully avoid every annoyance, and the very name of trials makes me shudder.

You mortified your most holy senses, never granting them the least indulgence; whereas I give

unbridled license to mine, and, impatient of control, I shrink back from the very shadow of affliction. But I am ashamed and grieved that I shun so much that virtue which was so dear to you that you did not wish to live a single moment without it, having it ever closely united to you as a companion even from your mother's womb. Inflame me, then, with a hatred of myself, and extinguish in me the flames of self-love, that the flames of the love of God may burn more brightly in my soul.

Add to the foregoing affections an act of faith in this mystery ; of adoration towards the person of Jesus Christ ; and of thanksgiving for the most sublime mystery of the Incarnation, and for the example of such astounding humility. Beg, also, a hatred towards, and the humiliation of, yourself ; together with the grace of a perfect indifference to execute the Divine wishes.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Jesus Christ, by His incarnation, teaches us to esteem, to love, and to desire *humility* : “ *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart* ” (a). The humility of Jesus Christ in this mystery was exceedingly great, for three reasons, principally : 1. Because of the *union* which exists between the Word and the human nature, for by this even the Omnipotent God became exceeding weak.

2. Because of the *body* which the Divine Word assumed ; for, since His soul enjoyed the beatific vision, His body ought to have shared the same

(a) Matthew xi. 29.

happiness, and yet Jesus assumed a body subject to every misery.

3. Because of the *place* where Jesus Christ shut Himself up. He who is Immense by His essence, remained imprisoned for nine long months in His mother's womb.

All this our Redeemer did, in order to teach us humility ; and shall we wish to become more and more proud every day ?

II. Jesus Christ, in His Incarnation, teaches us to esteem, to love, and to desire *mortification*, which affected Him in this mystery, principally, for three reasons : 1. By reason of the *inconveniences endured in His mother's womb*, wherein He remained for nine months, confined in a narrow space and immovable.

2. Because of the *full use of reason* which He possessed, in a degree far surpassing not only all men, but even all the angels together.

3. Because of the *distinct knowledge which He had of future events*, by means of which the Eternal Father represented to Him, from the very first moment of His life, all the afflictions, the sorrows, the insults, and the torments which He would have to endure until His death.

CONSIDERATION.

On Humility.

The object of this day's meditation is the imitation of Christ in those virtues which principally shine forth in the mysteries of the Incarnation, and the Nativity ; that is, in humility, in mortification, and in poverty. These, in fact, were His inseparable

companions from the manger to the cross, from the cradle to the sepulchre. To-day, therefore, we shall treat of humility, deferring the consideration of the other two virtues until to-morrow.

In endeavouring to acquire a higher *esteem*, a more tender *love*, and a more eager *desire* of humility, (for these are the three degrees which we ought to aspire to with all our powers during this present week) we will derive very great assistance from the consideration of the excellence, the utility, and the natural fitness of this sublime virtue.

I. As regards its *excellence*, the Fathers of the Church consider no praise extravagant. Let Saint Augustine speak for all: "*If you ask me,*" says that holy father, "*what virtue holds the first place in the religion and school of Christ? I answer that the first is humility. If you ask me what virtue ranks next?—Humility. What virtue holds the third place?—Humility*" (a). Is it possible to say anything more sublime upon the subject? or can anything be advanced which is better calculated to instil into us an esteem for this virtue? And this was precisely the object which the Saint had in view, and his words are admirably calculated to produce the desired effect. For, 1. *Humility is the foundation of Faith*; subduing our proud reason, it subjects it to the yoke of Faith, "*bringing into captivity every understanding*" (b). Where humility does not exist there is no Faith. But since Faith is the corner-stone of all religion, the basis of spiritual discipline, and the starting-point in our march towards heaven, it is evident that humility, as being the foundation on

(a) S. Augustine, Ep. 56.

(b) 2 Cor. x. 5.

which Faith itself rests, is of very great value, and appreciable in a very high degree.

2. S. Bernard says that it is the firm and solid foundation of all the other virtues, "*for as pride is the beginning of all sin (a), so is humility the root of all virtue*" (b). It embraces within itself, and preserves all the other virtues. "*It is,*" says S. Chrysostom, "*the mother and the nurse, the pillar and anchor, the prop and bond of all these*" (c). While on the other hand it may be said of the man who has not humility, that "*all his works are fruitless*" (d).

3. Nay more, without humility even the brightest virtues degenerate into vices. For without this virtue mortification becomes hypocrisy, contemplation an illusion, the contempt of riches, vanity. Without it the deserts of the anchorites, the penitential exercises of the confessors, the tortures endured by the martyrs, and the zeal of the apostles, are but the laughing-stock of men and demons. But, where humility exists, there even defects become virtues, "*since God is better pleased with humility in imperfect actions than with pride in good ones.*"

4. Moreover, without humility, even God's very graces are a hurt to us; for, to use the simile of S. Nilus, as favourable winds wreck a vessel if they drive her upon hidden sand-banks, so the abundance of heavenly graces lead a soul to perdition, if she nurtures a secret pride. The lights of the Holy Ghost, far from enlightening, but cause the greater darkness in that soul; the knowledge of heavenly things, far from improving her, serve but to make

(a) Eccles. x. 15. (b) Bernard. de Consideratione.

(c) Chrys. hom. xxx. in Acta. (d) S. Greg. in Ps. vii.

her worse by puffing her up with pride ; the gift of prayer, of prophecy, and of tongues, is for her but a poisonous drug. All these considerations, then, ought to teach us to *estimate* at its due value the *excellence* of humility.

II. The extreme *utility* of this virtue will teach us, moreover, to *love it*, since whatever is useful easily wins our *love*. The first advantage, then, which humility presents to us is its close *resemblance* to Jesus Christ. For, since lowliness was the distinctive condition of Jesus Christ upon earth, the soul that is humble becomes a true picture of Him, by conforming its sentiments and affections to the sentiments and affections of Jesus. With Him it ever loves scorn and insults ; for Jesus, during His life, had a great esteem and a tender love for rebuffs and slights : *He bears the reproach of Christ* (a).

And who can ever paint in fitting colours what an inestimable blessing it is to copy in one's self to the life the image of Jesus Christ : to adorn one's self, as it were, with His garments ; to feel and to wish, to value and to despise, to love and to hate, in perfect conformity with Him ; to be guided by the same spirit, and, as it were, animated by the same soul ; and, by this unity of habit and affection, to be the delight, the joy, and the crown of Jesus Christ. Who is it, then, that will not love humility, which makes the soul so like to that of the Son of God ?

The second advantage which humility brings with it is *peace of mind*, which finds its natural resting-place in humble hearts, where it reigns supreme. Because for the very reason that the humble man is

(a) Heb. xiii. 13.

not ambitious of being honoured or esteemed, but, on the contrary, eagerly desires to be despised and trampled under foot, the fountain of all disquietude is dried up within him. For, who can disturb the peace of one whose greatest delight is to be scoffed at and insulted?—who receives a blow with a smiling countenance, and forthwith presents the other cheek to the person who strikes him? Who will not say that such a one is already, to some extent, a denizen of heaven, and participates in the tranquil happiness of the blessed? Saint Climacus says, “Whenever you see a soul enjoying most perfect tranquillity, you may conclude that that soul is profoundly humble”.

The third advantage which we derive from humility is the rapidity with which it carries us to the most sublime degree of sanctity. The humble man is shunned by the proud, because they despise him; the consequence is, that finding himself shunned by the world, he, in his turn, shrinks from contact with it; and keeping himself to himself, and entirely absorbed in his union with God, he lives altogether in Him, holding aloof from all things else, and preserving himself pure and unblemished. By this purity of heart he disposes himself to receive the gift of Divine love, which is the culminating point of all perfection. Wherefore, S. John the Evangelist once said to S. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, while she was in an ecstasy: “*You will never find a heart full of humility which is not at the same time filled with love, by which the soul is perfectly united to God, and as it were, becomes one with Him*” (a).

(a) In vita, p. 4. cap. x.

This brings us to the fourth advantage to be derived from humility, which is an intimate *union* with God. For, since the heart of the humble man is free from all thirst of honours, God becomes its absolute master, there being no fear that his rival, pride, will dispute possession with Him. From this there results that friendly *communication* of heavenly treasures, which the Holy Ghost confers on this happy soul, quickly infusing into it a knowledge of the most hidden mysteries, far surpassing that possessed by the most exalted intelligences. We have examples of this in S. Teresa and countless others, who found in humility the key to open the most profound knowledge of heavenly things; for *those things which God hides from the wise and prudent, He reveals them to little ones*" (Matt. xi. 25).

And since the humble refer to the Author of every good that glory which results from their distinguished works, so God usually grants to them alone the privilege of manifesting the prodigies of His mercy, by bringing back sinners to repentance, and performing other glorious services. In a word, to sum up all briefly: "*the humble man God protects and delivers; the humble man He loves and comforts; to the humble He inclines himself; to the humble He gives grace, and after he has been depressed, raises him to glory. To the humble He reveals His secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to Himself*" ("Imitation of Christ," book ii., chap. 2).

Who, then, will not *love* so *useful* a virtue as that which leads to a close resemblance to Jesus Christ, to an indescribable peace of soul, to a sublime degree of sanctity, to an intimate union with God, to a

bountiful communication of the heavenly treasures, and makes us most suitable instruments to promote the glory of God, and to advance the cause of our neighbour's salvation ?

III. It is assuredly impossible not to *desire* a virtue, the *excellence* of which we esteem, and the *utility* of which we love, the more so, if we add the additional consideration, that it is *just* to desire and love it, since God himself, in becoming man, has manifested towards it so great a desire and love. It is impossible, I say, not to desire it, when one reflects that the most holy humanity of Jesus Christ, although incapable of sin, filled with the vision of God, and adorned with every perfection, nevertheless mindful (as far as its essence was concerned) of its own nothingness, most profoundly humbled itself before the Infinite Majesty of God, from the first moment of the Incarnation to the latest instant of its existence upon earth.

This is a thought to humble not alone the proud sons of Adam, but even the rebel angels who are now in the abyss of hell. O God ! “the Holy One, the Just One, the King of kings, the Judge of the living and the dead, He at whose name every knee bows down in adoration,” knowing, as far as his human nature was concerned, his own nothingness, humbles Himself most profoundly in the sight of the most Holy Trinity, and calls himself “the last of men,” nay, even “a worm and not a man” ; and man, who is but as “a drop of morning dew, an atom of dust, a light vapour” ; man, who is sin itself, and weakness, and misery, and the very essence of all that is vile—shall he dare to lift himself up proudly, to trumpet his own praises, and to place himself before

others? Ah! let us at length trample upon pride at the cradle of Jesus Christ; and let us learn here *to esteem, to love, and to desire* that virtue which He so greatly esteemed, loved, and desired during the entire course of his life.

EXAMEN.

On the virtue of Humility.

Humility is a virtue by which a man despises himself, and loves, desires, and rejoices to be despised also by others. S. Bernard distinguishes two kinds of humility: the one, of the *intellect*, by means of which one becomes conscious of his own nothingness; the other of the *will*, by which one desires, in addition, to be accounted as nothing. This alone is a virtue: the former is but a disposition of mind and a help to arrive at this latter. Examine yourselves, then, in order to discover whether your humility is purely speculative, or whether it is also practical, and affects your will? whether you are humble merely in words, or in heart as well? Whether you belong to the number of those who deem themselves humble, because they know that in reality they are contemptible? For, it is one thing to know that you are despicable, and quite another thing to despise yourself. Even the devil can lay claim to the former, but the latter is the exclusive prerogative of the sincerely humble.

The helps towards cultivating a spirit of humility are, chiefly, two. The first is the frequent consideration of the motives which we have for humbling ourselves; the second is the continual *practice* of humility. "*If, therefore, you wish to acquire the virtue of humility, do not shun the path of humilia-*

tions" (a). Determine, therefore, practically, the motives which you have for humility, and the opportunities which will present themselves to you for the exercise of this virtue.

II. The principle *degrees* of humility may be reduced to the following: 1. To think little of yourself, and to speak and act as one would do who holds himself as of small account. 2. When treated contemptuously by others, to bear it in silence. 3. Nay more, to desire, and contrive, that we should be so treated. 4. If insulted, to rejoice and thank God for it. Examine now to which of those degrees have you already arrived, and what degree do you propose to yourself to reach in the future.

Moreover, the chief *properties* of humility are three: 1. It should be *voluntary*. Even thieves humble themselves through necessity, but this is a humility which is ever repining, and is unworthy of the name of virtue. 2. It should be *sincere*; for "*a pretence of humility is the excess of pride*" (b): "*for there are some who humble themselves wickedly*" (c), "*who in their humility seek praise for their humility*" (d). This is merely vain-glory under the mask of humility. 3. It should be *prudent*: that is, it should know when, to what extent, where, in what office, how, for what end, and with what degree of moderation, one ought to humble himself: "*lest while one placed in authority humbles himself more than fits his station, he may lose the power of control over those who are placed under him*" (e).

(a) S. Bernard, super. missus. (b) S. Aug. de Virg. c. xliii.

(c) Eccles. xix. 23.

(d) S. Gregory.

(e) S. Bernard Tract. de grad. humil.

Here examine, 1. With what amount of patience do you bear with contempt? Do you for the most trivial slights give way to melancholy, indulge in mournful sighs, and annoy with your complaints everyone with whom you are brought in contact? 2. Do you, perhaps, covet an honoured place in the school of humility; lowering yourself for the purpose of being exalted, and despising yourself to win the praise of men? "*Humility must be indeed a glorious virtue, since even pride wishes to cover itself with its mantle!*" (a). 3. Examine, also, whether you be of the class of those of whom Ecclesiasticus says, "*There is one that submitteth himself exceedingly with a great lowliness*" (b), lessening his authority at the expense of the office which has been entrusted to him. Or whether your humility be not mere weakness, and an unworthy fear of not succeeding in the management of those matters which have been confided to your charge.

There is no one more generously disposed than the truly humble man; for, having no confidence in himself, and placing all his trust in God, he advances boldly towards every undertaking. He who is ever anxious as to the result of his undertakings clearly proves that he fears the gibes of men. Find out how you stand in this respect. For the rest, "*the greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God*" (c).

(a) S. Bernard, Tract. de grad. humil. (b) Eccles. xix. 24.
(c) Eccles. iii. 20.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

FIRST POINT.

Jesus Christ teaches us in His Nativity to esteem, to love, and to desire poverty. From the moment of His birth the poverty of Jesus was extreme, and (1.) we see it first of all in the *place* in which He was born. Not only was He not born in a royal palace, though being the Son of David, and heir to the throne of Juda ; not only was He born outside His Father's house, and a wanderer from His country, having had to go, by order of Augustus, from Nazareth to Bethlehem ; but He had not at His birth even the shelter of the most miserable inn, "*because their was no room for them in the inn*" (a), a circumstance which scarcely ever occurs even to the poorest of the poor. In fact He was born in a stable, and, of this same, half was tumbled down ; He was placed in a poor manger. His parents were no doubt most holy and most noble, but they were as poor as poor could be ; no servant waited upon Him—there was but an ox and an ass ; there were none to offer their congratulations, but the poor, simple shepherds of the neighbourhood. O truly wondrous state of poverty. O Eternal Father ! behold "*the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests,*" and your only-begotten Son "*hath not where to lay his head*" (b).

2. Great, moreover, was the poverty of Jesus Christ for want of proper *clothing*. For His holy

(a) Luke ii. 7. (b) Luke ix. 58.

mother, not having the garments proper for such an occasion, wrapped him in coarse swaddling clothes; they were not of linen, which even the poor man's child usually has, but they were of wool, and consequently too coarse and rough for the tender little limbs of Jesus; and yet who knows but that even these poor robes had to be borrowed. The new-born Babe was not laid upon soft feathers; no silken canopy hung above His head; but, in her extreme poverty, His mother "*laid him in a manger*" (a); and this manger was hard and comfortless. It was mid-winter at the time; and, while the cold winds chilled them, there was never a fire to give warmth to their shivering limbs. This wretchedness was followed by the two inseparable companions of poverty—scorn and sorrow; so that the Divine Infant might truly say with the Prophet: "*I am poor and in labours from my youth*" (b).

O my Jesus? the heavens are your dwelling-place, the cherubim are your throne, and yet you lie here in a stable, in a manger, between two dumb beasts. You are the splendour of the glory, and the image of the substance of the Father, and yet you lie here poor, and abject, and miserable; all but naked and shivering with the cold, without ever an inn in all Bethlehem to give you shelter. But I understand, O Jesus, why all this has occurred: *being rich, you became poor for our sakes, that through your poverty we might be rich*" (c), and that by your example you might incite us to esteem, to love, and to desire poverty.

(a) Luke ii. 7. (b) Ps. lxxxvii. 16. (c) 2 Cor. vii. 9.

SECOND POINT.

And yet, how luxurious, how easy is our poverty! both because we have a superabundance of superfluities, and love overmuch those things which are necessary to us. O God! what a difference there is between my poverty and that of Jesus Christ! He, in a poor stable—I, in a comfortable apartment; He, in extreme want of everything—I, complaining because I have not superfluities; He has neither a roof to shelter Him, nor food, nor clothes; and I am not satisfied unless I have fine garments, and delicate dishes, and a magnificent house to dwell in. Ah! when, at length, will I begin to imitate Him whom I adore! O luxurious liver! hear what the Lord says to you: "*Behold me, . . . and dost thou seek great things for thyself*" (a). I have been "*in cold and nakedness*" (b), and you seek out every luxury to gratify your flesh. I, "*in hunger and thirst*" (c); and you, ever in search of something to gratify your palate. "*All my days are full of sorrows and miseries*" (d), and you are always in search of conveniences and delicacies. Oh! how great a difference!

2. Who would not have thought that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, on coming into the world to redeem us, would be born in the halls of the Cæsars, surrounded by magnates of the empire, nursed at the breasts of queens, and clothed in purple, studded all over with precious stones. But, behold! instead of a palace, the Eternal Father

(a) Jerem. xlv. 5.

(b) 2 Cor. xi. 27.

(c) Deut. xxviii. 48.

(d) Eccles. ii. 23.

assigns Him a stable ; for courtiers, He has the beasts of the field ; and, for a royal cradle, a manger. And the Eternal Father treats His most holy and most beloved Son thus, solely for our sake, that, knowing the vanity of the world, we might learn to esteem poverty, and the treasures that are concealed therein.

3. To what has been said, add this further consideration : that Jesus Christ voluntarily chose this state of poverty, with all its attendant wretchedness, although He foresaw that it would be prejudicial to His repute as the Messias ; and, moreover, injurious to His health. And although all these disagreeable circumstances were brought about by the vanity of Augustus Cæsar, who wished to make a census of his empire, Christ, nevertheless, submitted to them, in order to serve His Eternal Father in the manner which He had decreed, being born with perfect indifference to the state and place which His Father had marked out from eternity.

AFFECTIONS.

I believe, O Lord, since you have proved it to be so, both by word and example, that the poor of spirit are blessed, and that of these is the kingdom of heaven. I believe that the world, in following riches, honours, and pleasures, deceives itself, since Jesus, the Infinite Wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, assures us that it is so.

O Jesus ! most abject in Thy poverty ! the rags that cover you, the manger, the stable, are to me, as they once were to the shepherds around

Bethlehem, a proof that you are the Son of God, in whom "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally*" (a). With them I, also, adore you as my Lord and my God. Oh! how I grieve that my over-anxiousness for the conveniences of life and earthly goods should have made Thee weep almost from the moment of thy birth, sorrowing over my foolish affection for the things of earth, and my eagerness to possess them!

Having been taught the mistake I made, by your example, I learn now, at length, to value the inestimable riches of poverty; nay, more, to love them, and, still more, to desire them. "*Your rags are more precious in my sight than all the purple in the world: your poverty is to me greater riches than the earth holds*" (b). The "one hundredfold" and the kingdom of heaven, which you have so generously promised to the poor, persuade me to love this virtue as a mother; to look upon it as dearer than the pupil of my eye; to guard and defend it as the outpost and stronghold of my religious practices.

Frightened by that dread sentence: "*Woe to you that are rich*" (c), I now renew my vow of poverty. With my entire soul I reject and detest every inordinate affection towards earthly possessions. This resolution is unalterable; I will retain nothing that is superfluous; I will not take, nay more, I will not accept what is necessary without permission; and I will not entertain an overdue affection, even for those things which I may be permitted to use.

(a) Coloss. ii. 9.

(b) S. Bernard. Serm. iv. in Vigil Nativ.

(c) Luke vi. 24.

I shall be always indifferent to any place, and to every kind of food, no matter how coarse and poor it may be, and it will always afford me the greatest pleasure to be able to experience some of the effects of poverty. Every hut will be to me a palace, provided I be engaged in your service in that place where it is your wish that I should dwell. You, O Jesus, model of poverty ! you are my treasure in whom my heart will henceforward repose. Despoiled of all things, it shall be my fondest pleasure to follow you in your poverty, for you are my reward one hundredfold, you are my all. O Lord ! thou who dost listen to the prayers of the poor, grant to me, that, poor in everything else, I may be rich only in Thee.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Jesus Christ, in His nativity, teaches us to esteem, to love, and to desire poverty, since His own poverty was extreme from the very moment of His birth. 1. Because of the place in which He was born ; in fact He was born in a half-ruined stable, out of His own house, out of His own country, without even the shelter of an inn.

2. His poverty was extreme, because of His *clothing* ; He was not wrapped in linen and fine robes, but in poor, coarse rags, and was laid upon the straw in a manger, in all the cold of that winter's night.

II. Consider the wide difference there is between your poverty and that of Jesus Christ. Oh, what and how great a difference ! He is content with a stable, while you seek for comfortable and well-

furnished apartments. He has but coarse rags to cover Him, and you look for splendid attire; He, lying upon the hay, is exposed to the cold and to discomfort of every kind, while He is unknown and forgotten by the world; you seek for every convenience and every luxury.

Fifth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the flight of Jesus into Egypt.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER the circumstances which must have rendered this journey extremely trying to Jesus Christ. The first of these is *the place which he was forced to abandon*, namely, His native country, where His poor family might have received help and comfort from their relatives and friends; and then the trial is all the greater when we think of *the place whither He was going*—to Egypt, a nation of idolators, who were naturally hostile to the Jews, and whose language was unknown to Mary and Joseph.

The second circumstance which rendered the Redeemer's journey a trying one, was the *season* of the year when He was forced to undertake it. For it was in mid-winter, and the summons came in the dead of the night, and His road lay through a country with which His parents were unacquainted—a rough and dangerous road it was; torn up by the torrents which rushed from the mountain sides; deep precipices threatening the traveller every now and again; robbers and highwaymen infesting it at every step;

and but ill-provided with inns or other accommodation for the wayfarer.

The *manner*, also, in which this journey was ordered to be undertaken adds to it a third element of discomfort. It did not take place in the daytime, but the summons came in the silence of the night, thus depriving the travellers of that rest which nature requires; and they were commanded to set out *at once*, no time being given to make preparations for so long and wearisome a journey; no time to bid adieu to their friends, no time to take steps for the safety of the little they possessed in the world; no time to lay in even a sufficient stock of provisions for the road, and without any intimation of the time of their return: "*Be there until I shall tell thee*" (a). This is, in brief, the only comfort which they received. And, in fact, "*He was there until the death of Herod*" (b); that is, for seven long years. Put together all the circumstances that contributed to render this journey trying, difficult, and dangerous, and you will find that, in comparison, every labour of yours is but a trifle. O Eternal Father! why should I, a slave and a sinner, repine, when I see how you treat your Son, the Holy of holies.

SECOND POINT.

Consider *the manner* in which Jesus obeyed in executing so difficult an order.

1. He obeyed *promptly*; for we read in S. Matthew that Joseph "*arose and took the child and his mother*

(a) Matthew ii. 13.

(b) Ibid. 14.

by night, and retired into Egypt" (a). The command was no sooner given than it was obeyed.

2. He obeyed *blindly*, without examining the command, without murmuring, without disapproving of it, although many weighty reasons would seem to counsel an opposite course of action, and the plan adopted was to all appearances at variance with the dictates of common sense. What weakness, the world would say, that a God should fly before the rage of a man ! Surely Omnipotent Wisdom did not lack means to moderate the fury of Herod, and to baffle his wicked designs ? And if flight were at all necessary, why was Egypt selected ? Might He not have tarried in safety with the Magi ? Why at least is not the term of his exile defined ? These are questions which would suggest themselves to the wise ones of this world ; but Jesus closes His ears and shuts His eyes to them. In fact He obeys *blindly*.

3. Nay, more, He obeys *joyfully* ; banishing all sorrow and loneliness, seeking no comfort from His friends, nor needing to be supported and cheered by His parents ; but He undertakes His journey with a light and joyful heart, abandoning Himself entirely to the will of His Father. Behold the type of true obedience which a real disciple of Jesus ought always and in all places generously to imitate. Oh, how this example of Jesus Christ ought to make us blush for our own cares, and anxieties, and trouble of mind, and unworthy complaints when we chance to be sent by our superiors to a place that is not entirely pleasing to us. The fact is, we are distrustful of the goodness of God, and so fear to

entrust ourselves to the care of His paternal Providence.

THIRD POINT.

Consider the *motives* which urge us to follow in this respect the example of Jesus Christ; motives, it is true, which have been already several times advanced, but which bear repetition, because their efficacy is very great. The first is this—*This command of my superior is the will of God.* The superior in issuing the command may, possibly, do so under an error of judgment, or may even be swayed by unworthy motives; but it is, nevertheless, true, that his command is for you the will of God. From Him everything depends. Without His will a leaf cannot be blown from a tree, a bird cannot fall to the earth, or a single hair be plucked from our head. Everything, sin alone excepted, depends immediately from the will of God. And though He does not wish sin, but merely permits it, nevertheless, He wills the effects that follow from it. It is true that He abhors and punishes the false representations of maliciously-disposed persons, the too easy credulity, and, mayhap, culpable dislike of your superior, which induced Him to send you to that or the other place; but that you should go there is the will of God. Yes, dearest brother, it, unquestionably, is the will of God.

The second motive is this—*That place of residence allotted to you by your superior is, of all others, the most suitable for you.* For God, being omniscient, knows infallibly the place that will serve best for the salvation of your soul, for the health of your body, for your own convenience, and your reputa-

tion. Being *omnipotent*, it is always in His power to assign you such a place; and, *since He loves you* most intensely, you cannot doubt that it is His wish to do so. Ah! He himself declares that He loves you more than a father loves his son; that He presses you to His bosom with more affection than a mother does her new-born babe; that He cherishes you as the very pupil of his eye; therefore, whatever place the Lord assigns you, through the orders of your superiors, is for you the most suitable of all places, and the one where you may most easily attain to perfection, and work out your eternal salvation. Ah! he who is distrustful of the goodness and love of God wounds Him in the tenderest part of His heart.

The *fruit* of this meditation ought to be a firm and efficacious resolution to place ourselves blindly in the hands of Divine providence; being ready, in a spirit of perfect indifference, to reside *in any place* It may appoint.

We ought to extend this spirit of indifference to matters of detail: as, for instance, 1, to dwell in such or such an uncomfortable house, in an uncomfortable room, and with a bad bed, indifferent food, and clothing not of the best; 2, to have for our companions cross-grained, morose, and uncharitable persons; 3, to be brought in daily contact with superiors who feel an aversion to us; 4, to be obliged to treat with rude, ill-conditioned, or, perhaps, ill-disposed people; 5, to undertake journeys that are trying, and, occasionally, even dangerous; in a word, to all the trials that may cross our path in life, either because of the *place* in which we reside, or the *people* with whom we are brought in contact.

AFFECTIONS.

I believe, O Lord, that thy Providence governs all things, "*and reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly*" (a). "*There is nothing hid from thy eyes*" (b); and, therefore, You know what place is best suited for me; and it is in your power to put me in that place, "*for thy power is at hand when thou wilt*" (c). Therefore, I may conclude that you will do so, if my sins do not prove an obstacle to the operations of thy goodness.

I acknowledge my belief in these truths; and yet, wretch and fool that I was, I have, in the past, been striving to withdraw myself from the influence of your Providence, and would dwell wherever the whim of the moment suggested? But, I repent of this, I fear thy avenging justice, O Lord; for you might justly permit that, in the place which I so anxiously covet, I might be afflicted with sickness, tried by temptation, over-burdened by labour, the victim, perhaps, of sin; whereas, in some other place which I despise, and where, if I could control matters, I would not be sent, you would have preserved me safe from all these misfortunes. Pardon the past, for I promise the most unqualified obedience for the future.

"*Behold, dear Father, I am in thy hands; Thou knowest everything; and there is nothing in man's conscience hidden from Thee. Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress. Do with me according to*

(a) Wisdom viii. 1.

(b) Ecclesiasticus xxxix. 24.

(c) Wisdom xii. 18.

thy good pleasure (a), for it cannot but be good, whatever thou shalt do by me (b). Lo, I am thy servant, ready to obey Thee in all things" (c). If it be Thy will that I should dwell in a poor, mean locality—blessed by Thy will; if you wish that my residence should be fixed in some pleasant and agreeable place—in that place, also, be Thy will blessed. "Thou art the Lord: do what is good in thy sight" (d). "My heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready—ready either for adversity or prosperity" (e). And it is the more ready, not only because "Thou orderest all things in measure, and number, and weight" (Wisdom, xi. 21); but, moreover, *with great favour disposest of us*" (Wisdom, xii. 18); directing all things to our advantage, and even drawing good out of evil. Wherefore, I cast myself without reserve into thy arms, saying to Thee, with Saint Ignatius, "Dispose of me as seems best to Thee, and as Thou wilt, for I know that Thou lovest me."

COMPENDIUM.

I. Reflect upon the circumstances which must have rendered the journey of Jesus a most difficult one. The first of these has reference to *the place which He was leaving*—His own country, where all His relatives and friends dwelt; and to *the place where He was going*—to Egypt, an unknown and hostile land. The second circumstance which added to the difficulties of the journey was the *time* at which

(a) "Imitation of Christ," book iii. chap. 50.

(b) "Imitation," chap. xvii. (c) Ibid., chap. xv.

(d) 1 Kings iii. 18.

(e) S. Augustine in Ps. clxx.

it was undertaken—in midwinter, and in the darkness of the night. The third, is the *manner* in which He set out—suddenly, without having time to make the slightest preparation.

II. Consider *how* Jesus obeyed this command. He did so: 1, *readily*; 2, *blindly*; 3, *joyfully*.

III. Consider the *motives* which prompt us to follow, in this respect, the example of Jesus Christ. The first is this:—*The command of my superior to go to this or the other place is the will of God*: for whatever happens in the world, sin alone excepted, is in accordance with His will; and even in sin, God's will is, to some extent, found; for though He does not will its cause, but merely permits it, He wills, nevertheless, its effect. Another motive to urge us to imitate the obedience of Jesus Christ is this; *the place of residence assigned to you by your superior is, of all others, the one that suits you best*; for God, being *all-wise*, knows the place best suited to you; being *omnipotent*, He can put you in that place; and since *He loves you* with an indescribable love, there cannot be a doubt of his wish to place you where you may best work out your salvation. Wherefore, have confidence in Him, act in conformity with His wishes, and you shall see the happy results.

The *fruit* of this meditation ought to be a firm and efficacious resolution to place ourselves, unreservedly, in the hands of Divine Providence, and a perfect indifference to every *place* where it may be the will of God that we should reside.

LECTURE.

*On the Preparation of the Soul for the Choice
of a State*

In order to serve our Creator in the manner which is most pleasing to Him, we must imitate Jesus Christ. 1. In attaining that degree of perfection which He will point out to us during the course of these Exercises. 2. By holding ourselves in a state of absolute indifference to everything, without a single exception, and without placing any limits to God's grace. 3. By not only excluding every *vicious* inclination to the things of earth, but by cherishing, moreover, a leaning towards *better things*, and always striving after what is most perfect. Now there are six things which exercise a great influence in weaning us from this golden spirit of indifference. They are these: 1, worldly honours; 2, the allurements of the flesh; 3, the conveniences that riches bring with them; 4, the inordinate love for one's country, or for any one place in particular; 5, the foolish wish to play the great man in the world, and to show off one's qualifications to the greatest advantage; 6, an overdue affection for our relatives, or for anything else that savours of flesh and blood. These are our chief enemies, which seek to draw us away from our last end.

II. Christ invites us to perfection, to the mystic supper; but it happens too often that one can say, as far as we are concerned: "*But they neglected, and went their ways; one to his farm, and another to his merchandise* (see the thirst for gain!) *and another*

said : *I have married a wife,*" &c. (Behold the leaning for sensual pleasures !)

This is the threefold bait which usually draws the thoughtless Christian from the pure fountains of virtue, from the service of God, and from following Jesus Christ ; in a word, from his last end.

But, in addition to the ordinary fare, the enemy of our souls has other and more delicate viands to tempt us. Thus, the man who has already overcome the desire of honours, of pleasures, and of riches, is touched so by his *love of country*, that, if God required his services elsewhere, he would either refuse, or would obey with a very bad grace. Others, again, are prepared to follow Jesus Christ in any place, but will undertake those *offices* only in which they may have an opportunity of displaying their superior talents. "What!" they say : "God has given us brilliant talents, an aptitude for business, and other qualifications likely to befriend us in the battle of life, and are we to hide beneath a bushel these talents which God has bestowed on us?" And, meanwhile, these deluded beings do not follow the ray which lights them on to a higher degree of perfection. There are others who are bound down by natural ties, love of parents, relatives, friends, and so forth and who, because of these obstacles, are unwilling to follow Jesus Christ, the fountain of all love ; and so, for one reason or another, we are led away from that golden indifference, through which alone we can thoroughly execute the will of God, which is our salvation.

The most powerful motive to overcome these difficulties is the example of our Redeemer ; following whom, we scarce can help despising honours, riches, and pleasures, when we see the humility of

Jesus, the hard life He had to lead, and the extreme poverty which He embraced both in *His incarnation* and at the moment of *His birth*. But let us go still further; let us cherish a spirit of perfect indifference to every *place*, to every *office*, to every *degree* of virtue, while we meditate: 1, his flight into Egypt; 2, his hidden life; 3, his sojourn in the temple. Contemplating the flight of Jesus into Egypt, let us rid ourselves of that silly leaning which we sometimes feel towards particular places, and let us be prepared to go anywhere that may be pleasing to God. Let the private life of Jesus extinguish in us that eagerness which we feel to put ourselves forward, and to let the world see the little there is in us. Let the example of Jesus, abandoning His mother and S. Joseph, in obedience to the command of Heaven, be to us an example to break through all ties of flesh and blood, how close soever they may be, and to follow the call of God in any state, even though it involved the highest degree of perfection.

Nowhere do we see the admirable plan of the Exercises better developed than in this meditation. What better stimulus to action than example? and is it not true that our strivings after perfection will be more or less proportionate to the model which we set before us for imitation? In the life of Jesus Christ we have, indeed, a model. He, so poor, is the Lord of all things; He, so afflicted, is God, the source of all happiness; He, so humble, is the Lord of Hosts, infinitely powerful. And, with this example before it, will poor, weak humanity dare to lift its head in pride? Will it still pay court to the flesh? Will it still sneer at Christian

poverty? Oh! what a contrast between our lives and the life of Jesus. In His infancy, Jesus is forced to fly into Egypt. For thirty years, He lives hidden away in a poor tradesman's shop. In obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father, He secretly abandons His mother, whom He so tenderly loved; and yet, *we* seek for comfortable mansions, we are unwilling to accept lowly offices, and we close our ears to the voice of God, who lovingly invites us to serve Him in a state of greater perfection.

§ II.

After the meditation of the entry of Jesus into the temple, S. Ignatius proceeds to distinguish two states of life, in both of which our Lord was a model which all Christians might copy with advantage. "The first consists in observing the commandments of God; and this is called the ordinary state," which all Christians who have attained to the use of reason are bound to embrace, if they wish to work out their salvation. Jesus sets us an admirable example of this kind of life, for we read in the gospel that He was submissive and devoted to his parents: "*He was subject to them.*" But He left us a model of a still higher and more perfect life, when, abandoning His fosterfather and His mother, He devoted Himself to the service of His Eternal Father in the temple (*a*), thereby foreshadowing the religious state, and teaching us that we, also, ought to embrace this state with indifference, if such be God's will.

S. Ignatius would seem to have borrowed the idea of these two states from what we read in the nine-

(*a*) Lib. Exercit. die 2, heb. 2.

teenth chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel, where we are told that a certain young man came to Jesus and said, "*Good master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting? Who said to him, . . . if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*" (a). This is the *first* and *ordinary* state of a Christian: it is the *first*, because we begin to be bound by its obligation directly we attain to the use of reason; it is the *ordinary* one, because without it no one can be saved. But when the young man had answered: "*All these I have kept from my youth; what is yet wanting to me? Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me*" (b). This is the second stage of gospel perfection, and it is one we should not hesitate to aspire to, if we feel that we are called thereto by God. Whosoever fails to do so, imperils his eternal salvation, by rejecting the powerful means which God has placed within his reach to attain his last end.

It should be observed, however, that the examination respecting the choice of a suitable state ought to be made after the meditation on the sojourn of Jesus in the temple, when he abandoned His earthly parents for the purpose of devoting Himself to the service of His Heavenly Father. This S. Ignatius expressly lays down after the meditation in question: "*It is now proper that, after contemplating the life of the Saviour, we should seek out, and beg of Him to make known to us the special state of life in which His Divine Majesty may wish us to serve Him.*" But, nevertheless, though this is the ordinary time for

(a) Matt. xix. 16 and 17.

(b) Ibid. 20 and 21.

making this choice, yet, if at an earlier period we should experience movements of grace impelling us to embrace this or the other state of life, we ought to indulge them, without, however, tarrying over them too long. Finally, should our choice of a state be already made, our sole aim should be to become perfect in it.

§ III.

I. Regarding this election of a state, three things demand our special attention: 1. The first is the disposition of soul which is required on the part of the person engaged in making this choice; 2, the best method of making it; and 3, the matter or points of the election. With regard to the *disposition of soul* which is required, the Directory says that it consists: 1, in a perfect indifference to all things; 2, in the absence of every disorderly affection; and 3, in an ardent desire to become more perfect. Without these three dispositions, the soul would either be *obstinate* in opposing the operations of grace, *weak* in resisting the assaults of the passions which strive to draw her towards evil, or *clouded* so as to fail in seeing the ray of grace which leads her on to a higher state of perfection.

II. As regards the *manner* of making this election, we shall derive assistance from the practice set down after to-morrow's consideration, in respect of which it should be observed, that S. Ignatius distinguishes three times for making the election. *The first* is when the will of God is made so clearly manifest to a person, that he cannot even entertain a doubt on the subject. Such, for instance, were the

vocations of S. Matthew and S. Paul. But this way is an extraordinary one, and the result of an extraordinary grace from God, which does not fall within the limits of our reason, and which we should neither ask for nor expect from God. *The second time* is when the mind is impelled and drawn by an internal movement of so efficacious a nature, that, without scarce an effort of the intellect, it finds itself as it were forced to elect a certain state. *The third time* is, when the intellect, by a process of reasoning, and by examining and balancing the reasons on one side and the other, gives light to the will to make a choice of that which, after due deliberation, shall seem best (a). These three times differ in the motives which regulate them. *In the first*, the will is impelled to make a choice by a singular feeling of certainty, which leaves not the slightest doubt that the impulse comes from God. *In the second*, it is led to make its choice, not by any feeling of absolute certainty, but by a probable conjecture that the impulse came from God. *In the third*, the intellect, by means of reasoning and balancing the arguments for and against one side and the other, induces the will to make choice of one or the other state. So that on the two first occasions the will precedes the action of the intellect; whereas, on the third, the reason adduced by the intellect precedes the determination of the will. The two first methods are the most perfect; but the third is the easiest, and the most conformable to our nature; and, therefore, since in the second method we have no absolute security that the impulse which we feel comes from

God, the most secure plan will always be to unite to it the examination and judgment of the intellect (a).

III. As regards the *points* affecting our choice, we should not *dwell* upon them to any great extent to-day, being content with proposing to ourselves and determining the *substance* of the life which we propose to embrace; which substance, according to the Directory, may be resolved into these two points: *Will we be content merely with the practice of the precepts? or, will we advance still further to the practice of the counsels of the gospel?* And if we propose to embrace the counsels, will it be in the Religious state, or in the world? If in the Religious state, in what order? And having determined the order, when, and where shall we enter 't? And here two considerations merit our attention: 1, not to select an order in which discipline has become relaxed; and 2, not to attend merely to your own strength and your own inclinations, but to examine, also, whether you have the required qualifications of learning and talent to fit you for such an institute. Once, however, you have discovered that your vocation comes from God, and have resolved to follow it, lose no time in carrying your resolution into effect; for, as S. Ambrose says, "*the grace of God suffers not protracted delays*".

The *second* point in our choice regards the *means* by which we may be enabled to attain to the highest degree of perfection in the state which we have chosen, and to sanctify ourselves therein. These means consist in a scrupulous exactness in the performance of our daily actions, in fervent prayer, in continual

(a) Directory, ch. xxvi. n. 5 and 6.

recollection, in the frequentation of the sacraments, in the constant practice of the general and particular examinations of conscience, in the fervent exercise of all the virtues—particularly of humility, mortification, poverty, indifference to every office and every place, and in a continual struggle to subdue our disorderly affections, and to pluck out even their very least roots from our hearts.

We must next consider what are the steps to be taken in order to render the works of each day as perfect as possible, and to free them from the ordinary defects? Whether we might practise some holier and more useful method of praying, going to confession and communion, or, if we are priests, of celebrating the holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Whether we ought to bind ourselves by a temporary vow not to take more sleep than is necessary, to make some meditation and spiritual reading every day, and a retreat of one day at the end of each month? And so, with regard to other like matters.

Moreover, we might examine: 1, Whether we ought to reform anything in our lives in respect of poverty? Whether there is any little luxury or superfluity which we ought to put from us? 2. By what means might we attain a higher degree of humility? What humiliations ought we voluntarily to seek, what honours ought we shun? Whether by a heroic silence we let pass unnoticed the insults of our inferiors, the detractions and calumnies of our equals, and the petty annoyances which we suffer at the hands of our superiors? or, rather, whether we feel inclined to make answer, to defend ourselves, to proclaim our innocence, and thus lose a higher degree of merit? 3. What mortifications ought we

regularly to prescribe to ourselves? How put in practice the rule of seeking, as far as possible, for mortifications in all things? Whether we will deny ourselves food and drink outside the times of our ordinary meals? How shall we regulate our daily food? 4. Whether we ought to place ourselves unreservedly in the hands of our superiors, with a perfect indifference to every office, and to every place, even those towards which we feel the greatest repugnance? or whether we ought to lay down a rule for ourselves, or even make a vow, never to remark upon any order or arrangement of theirs? 5. How should we overcome that inordinate affection which we feel towards our relatives and friends; that human respect, that predominant passion?

The *third* point concerning our choice has reference to *other particular things*. For example, whether we ought to accept or refuse that office, that employment; or, if we are priests, that parish, or that canonry? How should we regulate our conduct in transacting this or that business? What ought to be improved or perfected in the discharge of the trust confided to us? By what means can we or ought we promote with greater zeal the salvation of souls? In one word, the principal motive according to S. Ignatius, to guide us in making our choice, is "*to bring about a solid emendation or reformation in each one's state of life*" (a). With regard to the foregoing points, it must, however, be borne in mind that each person ought not to reflect upon them all, but on such of them only, as his spiritual wants and his circumstances may require.

(a) Lib. Exercit. ad finem. heb. 2.

For the rest, whatever be the point which anyone takes up as the matter of his considerations, we ought always, as S. Ignatius remarks, "*look with a pure and simple eye to the end for which we were created; namely, God's glory and our own salvation; so that we should not aim at, or seek for anything, except what may advance the honour of God and our own salvation*" (a).

IV. If you should ask me when one should perform this exercise of the election of a state, I should answer that it is to be performed at some time when the soul is perfectly tranquil; and, according to S. Ignatius, "*tranquillity is then known to be present when the soul is not disturbed by various spirits*" (b). The better to understand this we should know that the soul may be moved—1, by the spirit of good alone, by way of consolations. 2. By the spirit of evil alone, when deluged by desolations. 3. Finally, by both spirits together, but with opposite movements. We should take care not to make any election on either of the two last-mentioned occasions; and even on the first some precautions must be observed, which shall be detailed in the exercises for to-morrow.

For the rest, in all our actions where doubt arises, be it of great or lesser import, we should put this exercise of election in practice; and we shall, thus, have always at hand the best, the easiest, and most secure way to attain, according to the wishes of the Lord, the happy termination of whatever business may engage our attention for the time being.

(a) In lib. Exercit. in prælud. ad elect. Item ad fin. heb. 2.

(b) Ibid. de Elect.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Hidden Life of Jesus Christ.

FIRST POINT.

Reflect upon the sublime nature of this mystery. The hidden life of Jesus Christ contains within it a mystery, which is the source of the sweetest comfort to the humble, and of the greatest confusion to the proud; and it is a perfect antidote against that temptation which so frequently assails us—a longing to be mighty in this world, and to show off to the best advantage what little excellence we may chance to possess. Come hither, then, whoever you are, that feel this fever of pride burning in your blood, and cast an eye upon Jesus. Behold the Man-God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, who came into the world to wage war against sin, to banish error, to correct corrupt morals, and to sanctify the world—this Man-God (who will not be astounded at the fact?) lives a poor, despised and hidden life, in a wretched little hamlet, in the humble workshop of a tradesman, and plying the tradesman's art Himself.

Those hands which created the world, those fingers from which the universe is suspended, now hold the broom to cleanse the house; they cut and saw wood; they plane planks and beams; they gather faggots and chips; they wash and clean the kitchen utensils. He shuts himself up unknown to the world, and to those few who do know Him, He makes himself appear as nothing better than an

ignorant and contemptible artisan. In this manner acts He who, some few years afterwards, could preach in the Temple of Solomon; could argue and lay down principles of the most sublime philosophy in the schools and the academies; could dictate a code of civil government for magistrates and princes; could traverse cities, provinces, and kingdoms, healing the infirm, teaching those who were in health, converting sinners by the force of His example, and drawing whole nations after Him by the splendour of His miracles. Yet He remains concealed in an obscure little village of Palestine, in the workshop of a poor tradesman, abject and without honour, and this not for three or four, but for full thirty years. O stupendous prodigy of humility!

Let the "*sons of men, liars in the balances*" (a); that is, liars in their judgments; let them now come and consider attentively—1, Who it is that lives this hidden life? 2. Where? 3. And for how long? And let them learn at this school to moderate their foolish desire to put themselves before the world, to lord it over others, and make a show and parade of their talents. O Jesus, "*verily thou art a hidden God*" (b), "*making darkness thy covert*" (c). Ah, grant that thy obscurity be to me as the noonday brightness, in which I may clearly see how much vanity there is allied with positions of honour and eminence.

SECOND POINT.

Reflect upon the great truth concealed in this mystery. Jesus, while thus hidden away, apparently

(a) Ps. lxi. 10. (b) Isaias xlv. 15. (c) Psalm xvii. 12.

doing nothing, burying his talents, and leading a despised life, forgotten by all, lived, nevertheless, most perfectly. He performed everything ; nay, the greatest of all things. This life, which, in human estimation, was idle, useless, and vain ; was, in the sight, of the Divine Father, most laborious, most useful, and most glorious, because He lived in the manner that His Father had appointed for Him ; He did what his Father wished that He should do ; and He was in that place where his Father wished that He should be. So that if, during all that time, Jesus had done other than He did, or had lived otherwise, or elsewhere, He would have done badly ; for He would have failed to fulfil the will of His heavenly Father.

If this is so, our perfection does not consist in doing great things—that is, things great only in the eyes of the world. It does not consist in astonishing cities by our eloquence, or schools by our learning, or our native country by the brilliancy of our achievements, or in hearing ourselves styled great men. No ; our perfection does not consist in such things : but it consists entirely in doing the will of God, that is, in living in a state of perfection in that place, in that office, in that degree in which the Supreme Ruler shall wish us to live. And this is that great truth, of paramount importance, which the Incarnate Wisdom has taught us for the space of full thirty years. But you may reply : To what purpose then has God given me those brilliant qualities, if, after having given them, He does not wish me to employ them ? I answer, Why did the Heavenly Father bestow so many sublime gifts upon Jesus, and yet forbid Him to use them for the space

of thirty years? Listen, proud man : God has bestowed upon you those natural gifts, in order that you might have something to sacrifice to Him. For the incense which we burn before God is not lost ; nor are those talents left idle, not to say useless, which are employed in accordance with the Divine will.

If then God is pleased that you should hold the very lowest offices, neglected by your superiors, despised by your equals, unknown to and ignored by the world, I pray you live in peace ; live content with your lot ; and cease to use those pitiful lamentations which we sometimes hear : “ I am useless, good for nothing, a burden in the world ”. Good for nothing ? Ah ! He does quite enough in the world who fulfils the will of the Eternal Father. Let this golden saying, God wishes it so, be your buckler to repel all the assaults of pride or of self-love, and to beat down all complaints either in respect of your employment or the place of your residence, or your degree of perfection, or the condition of your health. Ah, words of deep meaning, God wishes it so ! Ah, noble, noble sentiment ! but noble only in the eyes of Him who loves God ; not in the eyes of the lover of himself, and of the world.

This is the truth which crushes every immoderate desire of pre-eminence and power ; of honourable employment ; of fame and human praise—haughty desire—the fruitful parent of the greatest evils. For, thence flow murmurings and complaints against superiors, if they do not humour these pretensions of ours ; thence come rivalries and jealousies ; thence whisperings and detractions. If we but rid the soul of this plague, oh, how peaceful will be its life ! how

it will be watered with the gentle dew of Paradise ! Wherefore, as the scope of this morning's meditation was indifference to every place, so the fruit of this present meditation ought to be indifference to every office, to every degree, and to all conditions of health. Nay, more, we ought to direct the affection of our soul to a humble and difficult state, and towards things that are disagreeable to our senses and our self-love, impelled thereto by the example of Jesus Christ, "*who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame*" (a).

AFFECTIONS.

O most humble Jesus, my Lord ! although you were the light of the world, the blazing torch of the house of God, nevertheless you lived for so long a time concealed under a bushel, occupied in so mean a trade ; and shall I, who am but nothingness and sin, shall I desire to shine in the world, to be made much of, and employed in high and honourable offices ? Away with the thought ! Far from me such senseless vanity. Before the entire heavenly court, I condemn and abhor this foolish craving for pre-eminence, this vain ambition to enjoy high offices, and to exhibit to the world the talent which God has bestowed upon me. Henceforward, lowly offices shall be the goal of my wishes ; my sole desire shall be to live in obscurity and unknown to all ; Thy will alone, O Lord, shall regulate my entire conduct.

I call heaven and earth to witness, 1. That I prefer to be a worm, if it so please God, than to be

the highest of the seraphim, if He should not wish it. 2. If it be God's will, I would prefer to do nothing, and be a martyr to idleness, than to convert the entire world and die a martyr of the Faith, if that were not in conformity with the will of God. 3. I prefer, in compliance with God's will, to live hidden away in the most obscure corner of the earth, than to shine in heaven without the concurrence of His will. Provided I execute in all things the will of God, I shall always be sufficiently great, rich, and powerful.

Repeat here the Affections of this morning's meditation, and what is said there about the *place* apply here to the *office*.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Consider the sublimity of this mystery. The Man-God, infinite wisdom, power and majesty, who had come to reform the entire world, lives hidden from all in the workshop of an artisan: those hands which created the universe are now occupied with the use of planes and hammers: that mind, which is the intelligence of the Father, is now busied in the concerns of a humble trade; and all this for full thirty years! See how this example crushes your vain desire to make a show in the world. Reflect then, 1, Who leads this hidden life? Where? For how long?

II. Consider the great truth which lies veiled in this mystery. Jesus, thus concealed from public gaze, and leading in appearance an abject and useless life, nevertheless lived perfectly, and performed the greatest of all works, inasmuch as He executed

the will of His Father. Therefore, our perfection does not consist in doing great things, but in executing the Divine will. If the Lord wish that you should live obscure, neglected, and despised, be content to do so, and you shall be very dear in His eyes, and you will have performed the very greatest of works, for you will have done the will of God.

The fruit of this meditation is indifference to every office, and to every degree; nay, more, a holy leaning towards things that are lowly and humble.

CONSIDERATION.

On Mortification.

Mortification is the soul not only of every kind of imitation of Christ in general, but, also, of that indifference to every place and every office which has been all along inculcated, and which is the special fruit to be gathered from the exercises of this day. For without this virtue we cannot be followers of Christ, nor can we be indifferent to all things, unless we first tear ourselves away from the love of flesh and blood, and of every other creature. Wherefore, we see not only the utility but the necessity of treating of this subject here, since it is most intimately connected with the matter which we have under consideration at present. In the present consideration, then, I shall set forth the motives why we should *esteem* the more highly, *love* the more tenderly, and *desire* the more ardently the acquisition of this virtue. The first motive, after that of the example of Jesus Christ (which is the strongest, and which we ought always keep before our eyes), is:—

I. *The excellence of Mortification*, since it is a virtue which bears a striking resemblance to martyrdom. S. Bernard says that “*it is a certain kind of martyrdom to mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit; less terrible, indeed, than actual martyrdom; but more trying, because of its prolonged duration*” (a); and, assuredly, to suffer hunger whilst surrounded by an abundance of dainties, to keep down our natural inclinations, to deny the senses what they long for, and to force them to accept what they abhor, is “*martyrdom without blood*” (b); *an execution complete in all its details, save that the executioner is absent*” (c).

Perhaps, reader, you are one of those who would anxiously covet the privilege of dying for the Faith at the hands of pagans or infidels? Well: become cruel towards yourself, subdue yourself; conquer your rebellious appetites, and you will be a martyr; of low rank it may be, in human estimation, but, perhaps, higher in merit. By this standard calculate the excellence of mortification.

II. The second motive is *the necessity of Mortification*. For we are bound to practise it: 1. As *Christians*; since, at the baptismal font, we renounced the flesh and all its sinful appetites. Whoever, then, pampers his flesh is guilty of having violated a solemn promise, and is unworthy the august name of Christian. If anyone, then, professes himself a Christian, let him live a mortified life. 2. As *sinners* we are bound to practise mortification. We have sinned; our conscience

(a) S. Bernard Serm. xxx. in cant.

(b) Bernard Serm. de omnibus sanctis.

(c) Ambrose lib. 2 de Cain. cap. iv.

proclaims this truth to us in accents of thunder. Therefore, we must do penance ; and this we know to a certainty from God's Word. For, of the kingdom of heaven it is written, "*there shall not enter into it anything defiled*" (a). By the Sacrament of Penance we cancel the guilt of our sin, but the debt of punishment due to it remains to be wiped out. This debt of punishment is a stain—nothing stained can enter into heaven—therefore the soul cannot enter there until the debt of punishment is paid ; therefore, we must either cancel it here by mortification, or hereafter in the flames of purgatory. There is no way of escape. If you wish to avoid the flames of purgatory, you must pay in this world by mortification the debts which you have contracted with Divine Justice. Hence the need we have of mortification because we are sinners. 3. To no persons is mortification so necessary and essential as to *Religious*. What else is the religious state but a continual punishment of the senses, and the daily death of the natural appetites ? And, in virtue of their rule, what else ought religious to aim at except to conquer themselves, to live for God alone, and to die daily to themselves and to the world ? *Abstain, endure*, behold in two words the basis of the religious life. In short, a Religious is a man crucified to the world, and to whom the world is crucified in turn. That is, turning his back upon it, he esteems, desires, and seeks those things only which the world holds in dis-esteem, and regards with feelings of disgust and abomination. What is pleasing to the flesh is distasteful to him ; and he hates self-love with an

(a) Apoc. xxi. 27.

undying hatred. This is the condition of the religious state, and from it we can sufficiently conclude how necessary mortification is to a religious.

III. The third motive for mortification may be deduced from its *natural equity*. For, 1, it is quite just that ‘*as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification*’ (a). 2. It is quite just that as the body shared in the sin, it should share also in the punishment which sin involves. 3. It is quite just that he ‘*who remembers that he has committed things not lawful, should also study to abstain even from some lawful things*’ (b). But you will say in reply, How can I possibly hate that which nature prompts me to love? I will ask you in turn, How can you possibly love that robber which has so oftentimes despoiled you of grace?—that tyrant which has so frequently made you the slave of the devil?—that parricide which has induced you to crucify over and over your good brother Jesus?—tell me, how can you love it? Consider, I beg of you, whether it be just to caress and pamper your body, which is but a mass of filth, and the germ of worms and rottenness; to seek to preserve it from every kind of mortification, such as fasting, abstinence, the discipline, hair-shirts, &c. ; and, meanwhile, to permit your immortal soul to be neglected, stripped of grace, robbed of merit, and condemned—who knows for how many years—to the most terrible flames of purgatory.

IV. The fourth motive is the twofold *utility* which follows from the practise of this virtue. For, 1.

(a) Rom. vi. 19. (b) S. Greg. magn. in Evangel.

It is a dogma of faith that, for every supernatural act of mortification performed in a state of grace, there is a corresponding degree of sanctifying grace, and for every such degree of grace, there is a corresponding degree of eternal glory in heaven (*a*). Wherefore, since innumerable, nay continuous, occasions of conquering ourselves and of mortifying the flesh occur during the course of the day, it follows that he who misses none of them accumulates an immense treasure of innumerable degrees of grace in the present life, and of eternal glory in the life to come. On the other hand, whoever neglects them loses daily so many precious degrees of grace and glory. You believe all this, and do you, nevertheless, make light of so great a loss? Oh, how you undervalue your soul! Know that each one of those graces was purchased at the price of the blood of Jesus Christ; that it is a ray of the Divinity, and, consequently, above all value; and yet, in your indolence and carelessness, you contemptuously fling them from you by the thousand, and all for the sake of your filthy body? Every degree of heavenly glory contains within itself joys, great beyond our comprehension, and eternal in their duration! and yet, what an immense number of them you have lost! Even the very least act by which you restrain your senses is of so great merit that it surpasses the raising of the dead to life; and yet you have neglected so many of them, and you have neglected them, and have lost them solely not to oppose the desires of the vilest portion of man! 2. the second *advantage* resulting from

mortification is this ; that by it we either entirely escape, or greatly diminish the punishment which awaits the sinner in purgatory : “ *For the Divine vengeance ceases,*” says St. Anselm, “ *if conversion and human atonement precede it*”. If you endeavour, then, to atone for your sins in this world, you will not be punished for them in the life to come. And you know well how searching that fire is ; how it penetrates to the very marrow of the bones ! Think over it, brother ; but think over it seriously. “ *There, one hour of suffering will be more sharp than a hundred years here spent in the most rigid penance*” (a). What think you of it ? A very trifling payment in this life will satisfy the demands of God ; but if you defer the settlement of your account until you arrive in the other world, you shall have to pay to the very last farthing. Tell me, if with a penny you could discharge a debt of one hundred pounds, would you hesitate to do so ? or, worse still, would you refuse to do so ? Were you either to hesitate or refuse, every one would justly look upon you as a fool. And if by some trifling mortifications you can now wipe out the immense debt which you have contracted by your sins, and are unwilling to do so, think you that you can be looked upon as wise ?

V. But you will say, I cannot destroy my body by mortifications ; my natural constitution would not permit it. But I do not ask you to destroy your body, I only ask you to be moderate. Believe me, people are more frightened by the name of abstinence, than they are injured by the practice of it. For, why will you not be able to abstain for the love of

(a) “Imitation of Christ,” book I., ch. xxiv.

God from these delicacies, which you despise when you have gratified your appetite, and which you loathe when you are sick? Why will it be impossible to make to virtue concessions which you must make of necessity to satiety and to sickness?

2. Moreover, since the souls of sinners rarely burst the chains of sin, if you do not offer up your mortifications to God in their behalf, I implore, O apostolic man, by the Blood of Jesus Christ, which was so copiously shed for their salvation, "*Destroy not him with this meat for whom Christ died*" (a); by your gluttony rendering yourselves unworthy to be, in God's hands, an instrument for their salvation.

3. Add to all this, that as fasting put the devil to flight, so gluttony removes God from us. He does not take up His abode in a body stuffed with food, and made torpid by the fumes of carousing. In one word, whoever is not temperate may despair of ever attaining to perfection.

But you will say, I cannot lacerate my shoulders with the discipline, or torture my flesh with the hair shirt, and reduce my body to a skeleton, with hard beds and less sleep than I now enjoy. Well, in the first place, no one asks you to kill yourself, and there must be moderation in all things; and, in the next place, if such trifling pain here tortures you, how, pray, will you endure the fire of purgatory? The sentence has been already passed: sin must be punished either by an avenging God, or by penitent man: we must either do penance in this world or burn in the next. There is no alternative. . . . What is your opinion on the subject? What decision have you come to? . . .

(a) Rom. xiv. 15.

Imagine that you are already dead and judged, and are standing on the brink of purgatory; tell me, what opinion would you form, on your first entrance into that furnace, of those pleasures of the senses, on account of which you are now about to suffer so terribly? In what esteem would you then hold mortification and self-abnegation? Ah! you are a madman, if you do not now what you would then wish to have done! And if you could then return to life, what a penitent life would yours be. And is it perhaps a lesser favour not to be cast into it when you deserve it, than after having experienced it to be again set free? Ah! "*truly we deceive ourselves through the inordinate love we bear to our flesh*" (a).

EXAMEN.

On the Virtue of Mortification.

I. Mortification is a moral virtue which regulates, in accordance with the dictates of reason, the interior desires of the soul, as well as the external senses of the body. Wherefore, it is twofold, *internal* and *external*; the former governs the passions; the latter keeps a check upon the senses. Again, the sovereignty of the latter is of two kinds: *negative*, whereby it denies to the senses the dangerous pleasures of the flesh; and *positive*, whereby it obliges us to undertake penances of our own choosing. We have, elsewhere, treated of interior mortification; and shall, therefore, take for

(a) "Imitation of Christ," book I., chap. xxiv.

the subject of our examen to-day the *external* mortification of our senses, and, in a special manner, of the senses of touch and taste.

1. This may be reduced to three degrees : for 1. The sincere lover of this virtue is, necessarily, a bitter enemy to his flesh, to the conveniences of life, to luxuries, and to gluttony. Wherefore, as far as the rules of discretion and obedience permit, he chastises himself with disciplines, hair-shirts, hard beds, watching, and other penitential exercises. He takes food as he would take medicine, he refuses the more savoury, and chooses the less appetizing portions ; he never goes to suppers or evening parties ; he eats merely in so far as it is necessary to support life and health.

2. As far as prudence permits, he always chooses the plainest food, the coarsest clothing, and the most modest dwelling that he can find. Always, everywhere, and under all circumstances, he curbs the spirit of curiosity, and bridles his senses, especially those of sight, hearing, and taste. He denies them whatever might afford them pleasure, and presents them with whatever is sure to displease. Moreover, in standing, and sitting, and kneeling, and going to rest, he ever seeks the most disagreeable positions, and never neglects even the most trifling occasion of conquering and mortifying himself.

3. He is always engaged in some useful work, and is never idle ; and when obedience imposes it upon him, he freely sacrifices to God that interior sweetness which is wont to flood his soul, when he is not distracted by cares and labours. Wherefore, as far as his physical strength and a well-ordered love of himself permit, he never refuses any employment

assigned him by his superiors ; and, as far as lies within his power, he seeks those which are the meanest and most laborious. Examine yourself, then, with a view to discovering if you have yet attained to any of these degrees, and to which? What means will you employ in the future to reach them? Do you, too, wish to say with the apostle, *I die daily?*

II. The method to be observed in the practice of this Exercise ought to be : 1, *constant* ; 2, *prudent*. You will acquire *constancy* by the following means : 1. Commence with what is easy, and advance little by little to the more difficult exercises. 2. You would be practising a pious fraud upon yourself by resolving not to prolong this or that mortification beyond to-morrow, or the day after. 3. Frequently recall to mind the motives for mortification, which you have read in the preceding lecture.

But to constancy you must also add *prudence*, if you desire your mortification to be advantageous to you. That your penitential exercises may be guided by prudence, you must attend to the following rules. The first rule is this : according to the opinion of the holy fathers, those penances are to be condemned, which, either of their own nature, or because of the delicate constitution of the person who practises them, tend to bring on an early death, or serious illness, or an *undue* weakening of our physical powers, or sow the seeds of disease in the constitution. Second rule : those penances are to be condemned which *notably* impede the practice of the other virtues, or render us in a *notable* degree less efficient for the discharge of the duties of our state. Third rule : the rigour of penitential exercises ought

to be proportioned to the physical strength of the body, to the number and heinousness of one's sins, and to the impulse of Divine grace by which one is prompted to practise them. We ought to make the pain reach the flesh; but, as a general rule, we should never use those penitential exercises which cause blood to flow. And since in this matter it is easy to sin by defect or by excess, we ought always be guided by the advice of our spiritual director. In fact, "*we ought to treat our body as one would treat a sick person, to whom we refuse useless things, even though he eagerly desires them, and whom we force to take what is beneficial to him, though he should be ever so unwilling*" (a).

Wherefore, examine whether you have observed these rules; and determine with yourself how often, and to what degree, you will use the hair-shirt and the discipline, and content yourself with a hard bed and less sleep; but take care to be constant in carrying out these resolutions, mindful of those words, "*that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds*" (b); "*that you lose not the things which you have wrought: but that you may receive a full reward*" (c).

III. Finally, it must be observed with regard to all that has been said: 1. That exterior mortification should be practised only with a view of arriving, *by this means*, at interior mortification, which consists in bridling our sinful appetite. 2. That corporal austerities, if they do not tend to this end, and are not united to the mortification of the spirit, neither have great merit, nor do they prove of great

(a) S. Bernard, Epist. ad fratres de monte dei.

(b) Hebrews xii. 3.

(c) 2 John viii.

utility ; on the contrary, they serve but to deceive us, and to nurture pride in our souls. 3. That constancy should not degenerate into obstinacy, so that we should be unwilling to relinquish our mortifications for any consideration, even when charity, obedience, or urbanity should require us to do so. Temperance and moderation ought to be the seasoning of every virtue.

How have you acted in the past, or how do you act in the present, or how do you purpose to act for the future with respect to mortification ? Examine, . . . form your convictions, . . . take your resolutions, . . . and amend

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Sojourn of Jesus in the Temple.

TO THE READER.

The object of this meditation is to sever with a generous effort every inordinate attachment : 1, towards our parents ; 2, towards ourselves, and the conveniences of the flesh ; 3, and finally, towards every other created thing whatever, which, by enslaving our hearts, would be an impediment to the attainment of a perfect equilibrium of soul. So that, freed from every tie, we may become perfectly indifferent to all things, and prepared to elect any state that may please God, were it even the religious state ; or (if we have already chosen a state) to ascend to that higher state of perfection to which God may be pleased to call us, generously sacri-

ficing to Him whatever engrosses our affections. Three motives will prompt us to this : 1. The example of Christ. 2. The hope of a reward. 3. The fear of punishment.

FIRST POINT.

The Example of Jesus Christ. It is certain that the most holy parents of our Lord were worthy of the most tender love, because of the eminent endowments of nature and grace which adorned them. It is certain that Jesus did love them most tenderly, and in an intense degree ; and it is, consequently, certain that this separation from them must have been to Him exceeding painful and trying. Yet, no sooner did the most obedient Jesus hear the voice of His Divine Father, than relinquishing all the conveniences which His father's house might offer Him, despising the comfort which He might derive from the society of friends and relatives, little heeding, in fine, the immoderate grief which His absence would cause His most beloved parents, He abandoned them, without even saying Good-bye, and, prepared for everything, betook Himself to the temple whither He was called. Here, needy of all things, He devoted Himself, without reserve, to the service of his Father ; thus leaving us a clear proof that, severing every tie, we ought to sacrifice to the supreme Lord of all things whatever we hold most dear, the very instant that He makes known to us His will.

But alas ! the worldling will say, it is probing the wound too deep to demand of me the sacrifice of such or such a thing (NN.). Ah ! that indeed is

too much! I feel as if I were asked to part with the half of myself. But, what is it you say! Fix your eyes on Jesus Christ; compare your reasons for loving with those which Jesus had; compare the sinful affection which you bear to yourself and your own comforts with that most pure love wherewith Jesus loved Himself, and the conveniences due to His most holy humanity. O what an immense distance separates them! And, nevertheless, at the first beck from His Father, He sacrificed all these things; and will you think it hard to sacrifice to Him as a victim, with great merit to yourself, this sinful and most injurious love which you cherish for yourself?

But, you will reply, the love of our relatives can exist together with the love of God. Yes, it can; but not at least in a soul called to the more sublime paths of perfection; for such a soul, in punishment for neglecting its vocation, will run the risk of serious falls, and of losing its eternal salvation. Christ, in order to commence the work of human redemption, abandoned His mother, who was so amiable and so holy; and do you, in the bosom of your family, and held within their arms, wish to act the part of an apostle and a prophet? Know that this is the suggestion of nature, and not of grace; know that "*a man's enemies are they of his own household*" (a); and they are enemies the more formidable, because they are the more deceitful; who, when they give you counsel, have their own interests more at heart than yours, and look more to themselves than to God.

(a) Matt. x. 36.

Moreover, since Jesus, in order to execute the wishes of His Father, abandoned the most innocent comforts of His house, and even gave up every thought of Himself, it would be inexpressible shame if anyone were afraid, and shrunk from following Him, because of the most dangerous indulgence of the body, and the sinful love of self. Far from me, O Lord, be such an unworthy method of dealing with Thee. Behold, I place myself in Your hands indifferent to every state of life, or, in the state already chosen, to every degree of perfection. I have already taken my resolution. The inordinate love which binds my heart to that object (N.), my God, shall this day fall a victim before Thee, and let this sacrifice be for me the beginning of a more holy life.

SECOND POINT.

The second motive is *the hope of reward*, which is obtained, even in this life, by this entire holocaust of ourselves. This reward consists: 1. In a certain peace of mind which surpasses all sense, and is the forerunner of the happiness of the blessed! for nothing disturbs that man who has already dried up the fountain of all uneasiness, which is self-love. 2. It consists in an intimate and friendly familiarity with God, for he who has rooted out that affection which stood as an obstacle between God and his soul, freely enjoys an intimate union with his Lord, and God takes pleasure in making that heart His dwelling-place. 3. It consists in a certain special Providence, by which God lovingly cherishes, guides, protects, and defends these beautiful souls, and makes "*all things*

work together unto good" (a) for them. For since they have entirely despoiled themselves of self-love, and have cast their every care into the bosom of their God, He who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity, guards them with particular watchfulness, and enriches them with the sublime graces of prudence, constancy, fortitude, peace and joy.

Compare all these blessings with the pleasure which you can derive from a fondness for your relatives, or from indulging the ease of your body! Tell me, would it not be the act of a madman to prefer a piece of common glass to a sparkling diamond? And what, then, shall we say of him who is unwilling to abandon the creature in order to possess the Creator? Ah, Lord, I am covered all over with shame and confusion. I see most clearly that all the world possesses is nothing in comparison with Thee: and yet, I have so many times made you of less account than the vile things of earth. But pardon one who, from this moment forward, is resolved to be wise.

THIRD POINT.

The third motive is to be found in the *punishments* which would follow from a different course of action. These are: 1. The loss of very many precious graces which would be withdrawn from such rebellious souls. 2. The very grievous temptations to which they would be given over. 3. The habitual tepidity in which they would be permitted

(a) Romans viii. 23.

to become more confirmed every day until the hour of death. 4. The many trials that will be permitted to assail them; for God will arm every creature against them, in revenge for the cruel slight they have put upon Him, in refusing Him such and such a sacrifice (NN.).

Moreover, he who persistently rejects the calls of heaven, and whose heart is divided between God and the world, shall be rejected by God as an instrument for the salvation of souls. His very prayers will become to him an occasion of sin, for the grace to pray well shall be withdrawn from him, "*The devil will stand at his right hand,*" watching every opportunity to do him harm. "*His days shall be few,*" if not in number, at least in merits. "*His bishopric another shall take;*" which means that another shall receive that robe and crown of glory which were reserved for him in heaven. "*He would not have the blessing*" which was annexed to the act of conquering himself, "*and it shall be far from him;*" "*he loved cursing,*" which has been threatened against these vile slaves of the flesh, "*and it shall come unto him*" (a). Sorrows and insults shall be the part of his inheritance; and those same relatives, whom he unduly loved, to the extent of resisting the promptings of grace, shall afterwards become a sore burden to him, and bring upon him bitter shame. Finally, when the hour of death comes, he shall hear God thundering into his ear those terrible words: *I called, and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded: . . . now I also will laugh in your*

(a) Psalm cviii. 6. et seq.

destruction and will mock" (a). O terrible words !
O dreadful wrath of God !

AFFECTIONS.

I believe, O Lord Jesus, that, "*he that loveth father or mother more than Thee, is not worthy of Thee*" (b). I believe that "*no man can serve two masters, God and Mammon*" (c) ; the flesh and the grace of God. I believe that "*he that is not with Thee, is against Thee ; and he that gathereth not with Thee, scattereth*" (d). Wherefore, you will not accept a divided allegiance ; you will not receive one half of his heart from him who is unwilling to give thee the whole. This is why I fear, O Lord, the punishments which you threaten against those who obstinately resist your heavenly calls. I fear that terrible pronouncement : "*I will move thy candlestick out of its place*" (e). "*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof*" (f). I fear to hear from my angel guardian those words : "*For as much as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord (by disobeying His will), the Lord hath also rejected thee*" (g). Alas ! what has happened to so many others, may happen, also, to me. For what assurance is there that I may not be of the number of those who, if they fail to become saints, become devils ? My God ! either a saint or a devil ? Either very high in heaven, or sunk in the lowest abyss of hell ?

(a) Proverbs i. 26.

(b) Matt. x. 37.

(c) Matt. vi. 24.

(d) Matt. xii. 30.

(e) Apoc. ii. 5.

(f) Matt. xxi. 43.

(g) Kings xv. 23.

Oh, accursed affection (N.), if you should prove to be the cause of so much misery to me ; go ! take thyself from my heart ; go ! go ! I detest you ; nor shall I give myself rest, until I redouble one thousand times my love towards my dear Redeemer, and thus make at least some slight recompense for the many sorrows I have caused Him for thy sake.

Yes, my Jesus, in abandoning your dear and amiable mother, you have taught me to sever every tie of flesh and blood ; behold I follow you. Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth.

COMPENDIUM.

The object of this meditation is to banish from our heart every inordinate affection : 1, towards our relatives ; 2, towards ourselves ; 3, towards every created thing. We are incited to do this : 1, by the example of Christ ; 2, by the hope of reward ; 3, by the fear of punishment.

I. “By the example of Christ.” Though His most holy parents were deserving of all possible love, and He did love them most intensely, nevertheless, no sooner did He hear the voice of His Heavenly Father calling Him to His service in the Temple, than he immediately abandoned them, depriving Himself of the happiness of their society, and of the comforts of His father’s house. And will you, when God calls you, wish to place obstacles to obedience, because of the love you bear your relatives ? because of the comforts you may have to relinquish ? because of the inordinate love you cherish towards any creature ?

II. “By the hope of reward.” Whosoever frees

himself from those bonds of flesh and blood, 1, enjoys an indescribable peace of mind. 2. He unites himself to God by the tie of an intimate familiarity. 3. God regards him with a loving eye, and watches over him with a special providence.

III. "By the fear of the punishment which would otherwise follow." This punishment may be reduced to four heads: 1. The loss of most precious graces; 2. Trial by most terrible temptations; 3. A life of confirmed tepidity; 4. And the crushing weight of adversity.

Sixth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the two Standards of Christ and of Lucifer.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER 1. *The object of the war*, in which each of these two captains is going to put forth all his strength. Lucifer, "*having great wrath*"(a), and ever "*seeking whom he may devour*"(b), "*cometh not but to kill and destroy*"(c) and to "*cast us into the great press of the wrath of God*"(d). For, since he can never share the glory destined for us, he wishes to make us sharers in his misery; and since he has been banished from paradise, he cannot endure the thought that we, beings formed from the slime of the earth, should be chosen to occupy the thrones vacated by him and his rebel companions. In fact, with an insatiable thirst, he thirsts for the eternal perdition of mankind; he is never weary in his labours to bring about this result; he strives for it himself, and he keeps his miserable companions also busily engaged in the same task; and he would

(a) Apoc. xii. 12. (b) Peter v. 8. (c) John x. 10.

(d) Apoc. xiv. 19.

count his and their labours light, if he could but snatch us from heaven, and chain us down for ever as his slaves in the flames of hell. To this he is impelled by a twofold hatred: by a hatred *of God*, whom he would wish to be despoiled of his honour, and robbed of the homage which his creatures owe Him; and, in the next place, by a hatred *of man*, in whom he sees reflected the image of his Maker, and of whose election to eternal happiness he is bitterly jealous.

On the other hand, Jesus Christ looks solely to His Father's glory, and to the salvation of the human race; for, He "*is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (a); He came that men might have life; He came to give His own life for the redemption of the human race; He came to give us great and precious promises, "*that by these we might be made partakers of the Divine nature*" (b). This was the one goal of all His desires: all His labours and His sufferings were directed to this one end—"our sanctification and redemption" (c). And by this we are taught not only to work out our own salvation by all means possible, but, also, to exercise our zeal in striving to procure the salvation of others. We are prompted to do this, 1, by the raging *hate* of Lucifer, who exerts his utmost power to destroy the souls of men. For, surely, it would be a sad disgrace, were Satan and his followers to toil more assiduously for the damnation of human souls, than we for their salvation. 2. *The example of Jesus Christ* requires this from us; since, for thirty-three long years, He

(a) Luke xix. 10.

(b) 2 Peter i. 4.

(c) 1 Cor. i. 30.

endured so many hardships and trials, so many insults and reproaches, so many punishments at once painful and degrading, in order to rescue us from hell, and to open to us the path to heaven. It would be, indeed, a crying shame, were we to look on carelessly, while there were perishing around us immortal souls, for whom the Man-God died upon the cross between two thieves. 3. The third motive to stimulate us is the sublime *excellence*, and great *utility* of zeal for our neighbour's salvation; but these we shall treat more diffusely in the spiritual lecture.

O my Jesus, *to serve whom is to reign*; as I once did at the baptismal font, so now again I renounce the devil, with all his pomps; and I renew the resolution which I have already made in the meditation on the Reign of Christ. My resolution is already formed: I shall follow Thee wheresoever Thou goest; and under thy banner I shall fight "*as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*" (a). Not only shall I labour to procure my own individual perfection, but I shall also strive after the salvation of others, being indifferent as to the plan which you shall appoint for me to carry out this my resolve.

SECOND POINT.

Consider how different *the arms* are with which these two captains wage this war. For as the haughty Goliath appeared in the battle-field "*with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield*" (b), so Lucifer advances to the fight attended by three

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 3.

(b) 1 Kings xvii. 45.

legions, and these are "*the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*" (a). He entices and overcomes the avaricious with riches, the proud with honours, and the voluptuous with sensual pleasures. Riches, honours, and pleasures are the snares with which he entraps souls; these are the arms with which he wages war against heaven, and endeavours to lay waste the kingdom of God.

On the other hand, as David once "*prevailed over the Philistine, with a sling and a stone*" (b), so Jesus Christ, armed with poverty, insult, and tribulations, enters the arena to conquer His enemies. He makes use of these three arms as the fittest instrument to conquer hell, and with them He has proposed to Himself to restore the glory of His Divine Father, and to work out the salvation of mankind.

What Christian, then, will not hate riches, honours, and pleasures, since they are the snares by which Lucifer is accustomed to draw souls to perdition? And, again, who is there that will not esteem, love, and covet insults, poverty, and sufferings, since they are the most powerful helps to attain to the eternal happiness of the blessed?

Moreover, these three companions of Jesus are of the same merit, dignity, and value as His holy cross; for since Christ practised them, they have been elevated to a more exalted dignity. 2. By their means we are detached from vices, despise worldly vanities, and become like to the Redeemer. 3. Finally, the sweetness to be found in the practice of these virtues is beyond expression. They tranquil-

(a) 1 John ii. 16.

(b) 1 Kings xvii. 50.

lize the mind; they raise the soul above created things; they fill the intellect with a heavenly light, and inundate the will with a torrent of delights.

O my Jesus, root from out our hearts the foolish affection for riches, honours, and pleasures, and plant therein in their stead a strong and constant love for poverty, tribulations, and insult!

THIRD POINT.

Consider the different *habits* of these two captains. Lucifer, seated on his throne, his head raised in pride, frowning on his trembling attendants, cries out in an imperious voice: “*Come, we shall fill our houses with spoils*” (a), and “*we shall glory in the multitude of our riches*” (b); “*let us crown ourselves with roses; . . . let no meadow escape our riot; . . . let us leave everywhere tokens of joy*” (c); *let us ascend into heaven, let us exalt our thrones above the stars of God, let us be like the Most High*” (d). These are the baits with which Satan would tempt us—pride, riches, and pleasure. But do these lead to happiness? Far from it! And their votaries, instead of contentment and joy, find but fears, and anxieties, and trouble, and despair.

On the other hand, “*When I name Jesus, I bring before you one who is mild and humble of heart, kind, sober, chaste, merciful—adorned, in a word, with every natural and supernatural virtue*” (e); whose doctrine contains those precepts: “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*” (f): “*Go, sell what*

(a) Proverbs i. 13.

(c) Wisdom ii. 8 and 9.

(e) S. Bernard.

(b) Psalm xlviii. 7.

(d) Isaiah xiv. 13, 14.

(f) Luke ix. 23.

thou hast and give to the poor" (a): "*Sit in the lowest place*" (Luke xiv.): "*abstain, endure.*" The goal towards which all His wishes tend is humility of heart, mortification of the flesh, and poverty in all things; but hand in hand with these virtues there are marching, peace of soul, tranquillity, a holy joy, a well grounded confidence, and a spirit of fervour.

By these different characteristics we shall be enabled to distinguish the Lamb of God from the angel of darkness, when the time for election comes round; and they are such as ought induce us to turn our backs upon Lucifer, and follow the standard of our Captain Jesus.

AFFECTIONS.

I believe, O my Lord Jesus, that you have been constituted by the Eternal Father "King over Sion, and Ruler over Israel" (b); that there is no salvation without Thee; and that to "fight beneath thy banner is to triumph". Wherefore, with Saint Cyprian, I shall say to Thee: I am ready to become one of thy soldiers; I will enrol myself beneath Thy banner, and will swear eternal hostility to the devil. Far be it from me that, for a vile recompense, I should put on the livery of that tyrant, from whose slavery you have liberated me at the price of your Precious Blood; so far from this being so, I am prepared to accompany You in every undertaking, through all dangers, through every toil, provided I can thereby save my soul.

(a) Matt. xix. 21.

(b) Psalm ii. 6; 2 Reg. v. 2.

I believe, O Lord, that blessed are the poor, blessed are the afflicted, blessed are those that are cursed for Thy name; but, on the other hand, I tremble when I reflect on that dread sentence of thine: "Woe to you that are rich: Woe to you that are filled: Woe to you that now laugh: Woe to you when men shall bless you, for you have your consolation" (Luke vi. 24, et seq.). Wherefore, I despise, I hate, and I resolve to fly from riches, pleasures, honours, and ambition; while, on the other hand, I esteem and love poverty, adversity, and humiliation. For, what would it avail me to have lived in this world, amid honours and riches, and surrounded by happiness of all kinds, if in, thereby, straying from my last end, and deserting from the standard of Christ, I be condemned, with Lucifer, whom I have chosen for my captain, to endure eternal torments? Ah! I am ashamed of myself for having acted so foolishly heretofore; and I purpose in the future to atone for the errors of the past.

And since he does not truly love God who does not love his neighbour also, I am resolved to attend not merely to my individual salvation, but also to the salvation of my neighbour, in what manner soever Thou shalt direct—be it on the foreign mission among strangers, or among the plague-stricken in the hospitals, or attending on those who are closing their eyes on earth to open them in eternity, or guiding souls to heaven in the tribunal of penance, or teaching the doctrine of Christianity to the lowly ones of Christ—be it wherever it may—I am ready: Thou hast but to command, and I shall obey.

As a parting advice, S. Ignatius says: “*Implore of the Blessed Virgin, through her Son, and, afterwards, through the Son, of His Divine Father, the grace to be enrolled under Christ’s banner of poverty and ignominy, and to prove true to it to the death*” (a).

COMPENDIUM.

I. Consider the *object* of the war waged by these two captains. Lucifer has but one object—to rob you of heaven, and consign you to eternal perdition.

On the other hand, Jesus looks solely to God’s glory, and man’s salvation. “He came to seek out, and to save that which had perished.”

Wherefore you ought to follow Him by working out your own salvation, and by seeking, also, the salvation of others. You should be impelled to adopt this course. 1. By the *deadly hate* which Lucifer bears towards you, ever inciting him to work your ruin. 2. By the *example of Christ*, who, to rescue you from hell, suffered every torment, even unto death. 3. And, finally, by the *intrinsic excellence and utility* of zeal for our neighbour’s salvation.

II. Consider how *different are the arms* used by these two captains in this campaign. To destroy the souls of men, Lucifer makes use of *pleasures, riches, and honours*. Jesus, on the other hand, employs *mortification, poverty, and humility*, to save these self-same souls. Who is there, then, that will not reject the first, when he knows they are meant for his destruction? And who is there that will

(a) In lib. Exercit. ad finem hujus meditat.

not eagerly grasp the arms of Jesus, when he knows that they open for him a path to a glorious victory—whose end is heaven?

III. Consider *the different habits* of those two captains. Lucifer, seated on his throne of fire, with proud and stern look, calls out to his followers: “*Come, let us rejoice; let us be filled with riches; and let no one gainsay our pre-eminence.*” Jesus, on the other hand, sits down humbly, while sweetly and mildly He invites each one “*to deny himself,*” “*to carry his cross,*” and to “*place himself in the lowest place*”. Which of the two is the more likely to make you happy? If you follow Lucifer, there will ever be a torture within your heart—a restlessness—a worm that will never die—a something that will make you unhappy in time, and miserable for eternity. But, if you follow the standard of Jesus, peace, consolation, and spiritual joy will be your reward. And won’t you?

LECTURE.

On the object of the Exercises of this day.

S. Ignatius in proposing for our imitation the example of Jesus Christ, would teach us, that we ought to employ ourselves in God’s service without regard to circumstances—caring neither for adversity, nor poverty, if it needs be; neither caring how or where our life is to be spent. Now, S. Ignatius takes us one step higher, and by means of the meditation on *the two standards*, would have us indifferent even to the apostolic life, wherein we attend not only to our salvation and perfection, but

also to that of others ; and to the means by which God shall be pleased that we reach the *highest* degree in this noble vocation.

To attain this, the saint suggests to us those three great motives which touched us so during the meditation, and which the more we think on them will the more excite us and spur us on to adopt generous resolutions. The first (1), is *the rage of Satan*, who thirsts for the destruction of our souls. Wherefore, S. Ignatius paints him for us in vivid colours :—“as in the vast plains of Babylon, seated on a throne of fire, surrounded by thick smoke, whilst stand around him an innumerable crowd of demons. Some he despatches to work evil all through the world, having regard neither to any city, nor to any place, nor to any person whatsoever ; and, with words of fierce hatred, he imposes on them to lose no opportunity of laying snares for the souls of men to entrap them, and precipitate them into the eternal abyss.”

It is horrible to see how “hell enlarges her soul and opens her mouth without any bounds” to swallow down so many millions of souls. Truly it breaks one’s heart, to see how solicitous is the evil one, how many are the arts, and the wiles, and the stratagems he uses to destroy them, and how mockingly he tramples upon the necks of us—the fools whom he has seduced and betrayed. And shall we quietly endure that so many souls, redeemed by the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, should fall in crowds into hell ? Ah ! we should, indeed, be ashamed that the devil would have a reater care for the ruin of man, than we for his

salvation. And what answer shall we give to God when he questions us on this point?

2. Let the next motive to incite us be *the example of Christ*, who, in order to procure the eternal salvation of souls, became man, suffered so much, shed so much of His Precious Blood, and endured so cruel a death. He invites us to co-operate with Him in saving souls; and to encourage us to do so, and to prove to us the price they cost Him, He shows to us the ropes that bound Him, and the scourges, and the nails, and the lance, and the cross whereon he poured out his life's Blood. And such and so great is His desire to rescue souls from hell, that He once said to S. Bridget that He was ready to suffer it all over again, and much more if necessary, to save even a single soul. Wherefore, S. Ignatius paints Him to us, "as beautiful in appearance and amiable of aspect, standing in the pleasant plain of Jerusalem with His chosen apostles and His other servants, whom He would send throughout the world to bear His holy and saving doctrine to men of every rank and condition, and to strive, by all means in their power, to be a help to all". Ah! he must, indeed, have a heart of stone, who, on seeing this example of Jesus, is not moved with zeal for his neighbour's salvation.

3. The third motive is the *sublimity* and the *utility* of the apostolic life. As far as its *sublime* nature goes, it is so great that it makes us the coadjutors of God. "*For we are God's coadjutors*" (a), says the apostle; and, therefore, S. Dionysius exclaims, "*that the most divine of all divine works is to*

co-operate with God in the salvation of souls." And what shall we say of its *utility*? If, for a glass of water given to a poor person, God promises so rich a reward—what, I ask you, will be the reward He shall give to him who has so often, and so many times dispensed the Blood of Jesus Christ in the sacraments? What reward will He give to him who has snatched so many souls from hell, and brought them back to repose in His loving bosom?

§ II.

From what has been said you may see how fitting it is, that if God calls you thereto, you should embrace an apostolic life; or, if you should already have embraced it, should strive to attain, therein, the *highest* point of perfection. And here you must reflect that, to enrol yourself under the standard of Christ does not merely imply that you have abandoned the standard of Lucifer; for that you are already supposed to have done, after the meditation on *the Reign of Christ*. But the intention is, that you should follow your captain *more closely* than ever—more perfectly—more *generously*—and by the same *plan*, and with the self-same *arms*, which your leader employs. This meditation on the two standards, gave to S. Ignatius the idea of the Society of Jesus, which, in itself, is nothing else than an apostolic institute, and a most exact copy of the Life of the Redeemer.

II. The *second fruit*, which we ought to gather from this meditation, is an esteem, a love, and an ever-increasing desire of slights, of poverty, and other afflictions; for, since Jesus Christ, who was

Infinite Wisdom, believed that these were the sole means to overcome the demon, the least to be expected from us is to esteem them, and to make use of them.

III. The *third fruit* to be derived from the meditation, is a more immediate preparation of the soul for the great business of the election of our state.

To make a proper choice in this matter, one must be thoroughly acquainted with the different spirits that try the soul, and the different feelings that agitate it, in order to discern what inspirations come from God, and what from the spirit of darkness. The meditation on the two standards gives us, on this head, a lesson that there is no mistaking. If you find within your soul the smoke of pride, the spirit of concupiscence, darkness in the intellect, inquietude, pusillanimity, a feeling of sadness, anxiety—oh ! say at once to thyself : here is the voice, this is the spite of Lucifer. But if you have meditated on the amiable modesty of Christ, upon His humility, His spirit of recollection, the sweetness of His voice, the serenity of His countenance, the tranquillity of His heart, and you feel within yourself corresponding impulses, which sweetly lead you towards the cultivating of a like spirit of modesty, of mildness, of humility, of sweet, and gentle, and tranquil thoughts, oh ! then say, without a doubt, it is the voice of Jesus which calls me.

We must also attend to two other matters, viz., 1, to the *thing* that we are prompted to choose ; 2, and to the manner in which we are prompted to choose it. If we feel ourselves tempted to select a course that is bad, or though not bad, yet dangerous, pleasing to self-love, and to the senses, and to hu-

man pride ; or even though it should be a something perfectly harmless in itself, but which past experience teaches us is fruitful in us of annoyances, temptations, and anxieties ; this is to us evidence, quite sufficient, that the promptings come from the spirit of evil.

We should be much assisted in arriving at a knowledge of these matters, by studying the plan which the devil employs in order to conquer us. Mostly he prepares the path for our destruction by instilling into us a desire of riches, as if they were things necessary to life and to the proper sustenance of one's family. Having once caught us by this hook, he next impels us to look for honours and for a more exalted station.

And once this barrier is passed, there are no further bounds to our ambition. He will tempt us to place ourselves above our equals, to make a show of the little that is in us, and to look upon others as of no account. And it is from this inordinate love of riches, of honours, and of one's own excellence that all those other vices spring, and especially that of sensuality, the appetite of carnal pleasures.

§ III.

Though the meditation of the two standards is of the highest importance, that of the *three classes of men*, which S. Ignatius places next in order, is not less so. For, after having generously resolved to serve God and to imitate Jesus Christ, in whatsoever state of life, or in the state already elected, in whatsoever degree of perfection He shall be pleased to call us to, it remains that we should select also the means which tend to

lead us to such a state of life, or to such a degree of perfection. And this is the rock on which the devil would wreck all our resolutions ; for there are those who believe themselves converted, simply because they know how necessary it is that they should change their lives, and they never consider all the while, the difference there is between desiring to change one's life and changing it in reality. Others there are—and I don't know how it is—who think themselves saints, because they have conceived a lofty ideal of sanctity, mistaking the sublime idea of perfection for its constant practice ; for it is quite one thing to know what perfection means, and quite another to practise it.

In order to supply a remedy for this evil, S. Ignatius, no doubt inspired by heaven, adds to the foregoing exercises the following meditation of the *three classes of men*, the object of which is, that we should not content ourselves with a *general* resolution to serve God henceforward, to reform our lives, and to imitate Christ, but that we ought also, with all the ardour of our souls, *to seek out*, and *to follow up such means* as are the most likely to crown our resolutions with happy results.

II. In this meditation S. Ignatius distinguishes three classes of men : *the first* are anxious, indeed, to change their lives, nay, more, to aim at perfection ; but, meanwhile, they either entirely refuse to practise the means towards the attainment of this great end, or, by most dangerous delays, they defer it until death comes. Men of this description are men of desires ; but they never put their resolutions into operation. It is true that they are anxious to acquire humility, but they reject, meanwhile, everything that can lead

to it ; for they have an abhorrence of mean localities low offices, and abject positions.

Another, frightened by that terrible sentence, "*Woe to you that are rich,*" would wish, it is true, to imitate Christ in leading a life of poverty ; but when the hour of sacrifice has arrived, he cannot make up his mind to resign even things that are but trifles.

Another is quite convinced of the necessity of mortification ; of controlling the senses ; of curbing our rebellious appetites ; and he resolves with himself, "Yes ! I shall do so and so ; I shall become a model of mortification ". But by-and-by, when it comes to some petty matter of detail, to a mere trifle, he who was so valiant a short time before, proves himself a coward. There is another class : those who over and over again vow to lead an apostolic life, and whom the slightest obstacle is enough to turn from their resolution when the time to execute it has arrived. Such people resemble a painted soldier. He has the drawn sword in his hand, and every moment looks as though he would strike, yet he never does. So, too, those of whom we have been speaking would become perfect without toil, and saints in imagination ; but, alas ! falling far short of the reality.

III. Those who belong to the second class do use, to be sure, *some* means to attain their end, but not precisely those which they ought to use. They do *something* it is true ; they take a step in the right direction : but then the doing of it in the *manner* which God expects of them, the being indifferent not only to *every condition* of life, and in the state already chosen to *every degree* of perfection, but being

still more indifferent to *whatsoever* means God may wish them to adopt in order to attain perfection—the being prepared to endure all slights and trials; to bear poverty, no matter how hard it be; to sever the natural ties which bind us to our relatives—Ah! this is indeed, for these the crucial test—“*hoc opus; hic labor.*”

They would not refuse God anything, and yet they would like to make bargains with Him. They would say to Him, “So much I concede to Thee, and so far, but no farther will I go. I am prepared to make this and that sacrifice, but there is another one which you demand of me, and which is somewhat hard.” And, meanwhile, they try thus to please at one and the same time God and themselves: “So far,” they would say, “O Lord, so far, but not farther.”

IV. Those who belong to the third class are persons who *never* reject the means of attaining perfection; persons who will hear of no delay; persons who are ever striving after that degree of perfection which they have marked out for themselves, and who are unwilling to reach it till their Lord and Creator shall wish, which means to say, by those *helps* which God shall have appointed for them. “*These*,” as S. Ignatius says, “*in their single-mindedness, make no half-hearted bargain with their Creator, but leave it to Him to do with them and theirs just as it shall please Him best*” (a), being resolved to place no limits to the operations of Divine grace, and ready to make, generously, every sacrifice in order to please God. Those, then, of the

first class are invalids, anxious to be cured, but unwilling to take the necessary steps thereto. Those of the second class are also anxious for a cure, but they won't have it unless the medicine be sweet, and the drugs palatable. But those who belong to the third class are invalids, anxious to be cured, and who won't refuse the medicine be it ever so bitter.

The Sacred Volume gives us a clear proof of this in the story of Naaman the Syrian. This great general, wishing to be cured of a leprosy, presented himself before the prophet Eliseus, that he might be cleansed. *"And Eliseus sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash thyself seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean. Naaman was angry, and went away, saying, I thought he would have come out to me, and standing, would have invoked the name of the Lord his God, and touched with his hand the place of the leprosy, and healed me."* But when he saw that he should have to wash himself, he said to his servants, Why should I go bathe in the Jordan: *"Are not the Abana and the Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them, and be made clean? So as he turned, and was going away with indignation, his servants came to him and said to him, . . . if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it: how much rather what he now hath said to thee: Wash, and thou shalt be clean. Then he went down, and washed in the Jordan seven times. . . . And he was made clean"* (a).

Whoever, then, wishes to be made clean must

belong to those of the third class ; and if he be not, his leprosy shall not depart from him.

§ IV.

In what has been said, we see the master-hand of S. Ignatius guiding us, step by step, through the Exercises to the selection of a state. To make this, one needs must have a perfectly tranquil mind—indifferent to all things, and free from every passion—so that there should be a brain, clear to think, and a will ever ready to act—so that if passion should draw us aside to any evil, we would shrink from it, and embrace the opposite virtue. Thuswise, that, if we have an overdue affection to riches, we should not content ourselves with being merely indifferent, but should strive to create within ourselves an ardent attachment to poverty.

Though S. Ignatius, during the entire of the second week, has been trying to instil into us this leaning for higher perfection, he does it nowhere with greater efficacy than in this exercise and in the *three degrees of humility*, the third of which consists in this, “that, to imitate Christ (even though it made no difference as far as God’s glory is concerned) one should choose to be poor, and despised, and laughed at, and to be called a fool, rather than be rich, and crowned with honours, and deemed a wise man.”

It needs no proof to tell us how powerful this motive is to incite us to perfection ; and here we admire more and more the prudence of S. Ignatius, who, step by step, and as it were insensibly, leads us on to this high degree of perfection, whereas had he, at the start, proposed to us this third degree of humility,

frightened by the difficulty of the task, we should have shrunk back from attempting it.

To this highest degree of virtue—the complement and ultimate end of the Exercises—S. Ignatius gives the name of “*the third degree*” of humility, because in it, as in a germ, is contained the seed of every virtue; and since the attainment of it means being true imitators of Christ, S. Ignatius is anxious that during the whole of this day we should turn over in our mind these three degrees of humility, and should have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, begging of her that, by her intercession, she would obtain for us the third degree from her Divine Son; and of the Divine Son Himself, that He would obtain it for us from His Eternal Father. And here one’s fervour must be redoubled; for, if fervour was necessary in the past, it now becomes essential in order to derive due fruit from the Exercises.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Three Classes of Men.

FIRST POINT.

Reflect on the *perverseness* of those who belong to the *first* class, and who, with the full light of the Holy Spirit shining on them, know what it is they ought to do, and even feel inclined to do it, but never can summon up courage enough to execute that which they have already resolved on. They keep putting things off from to-day till to-morrow, and they would put them off till the hour of death if

circumstances only permitted. What downright folly this is!—to know that there is a good you ought to do; to know *why* it should be done, and how to do it; nay more, to feel within you a desire to embrace a life of a certain kind—and yet, to play the poltroon—to be neither this nor that; and not to have the courage of making up your mind one way or the other—this is to be either a downright coward, or ill-prepared to act fairly with God.

But woe to the man who knows what he ought to do, and does it not; for “*he shall receive greater judgment*” (a). If, in the course of these exercises, Christ *had not spoken to him, his sin would have been the less* (b). But once he has heard so many eternal truths; once he has discovered the path of virtue; after the lights he has got, and the impulses he has received; if he still hesitate, he cannot have even a faint hope of his salvation.

Ah! my sweetest Jesus, what is it that I have done? Why is it that I have resisted such powerful calls that you are making on me. The dread sentence thunders in my ear, “*Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant*” (c). *I beg of Thee, O Lord, suspend thy judgment; now do I commence in earnest*; and I shall never, never leave off until I attain that degree of perfection to which you call me.

SECOND POINT.

Reflect on the fatal folly of the men who belong to the second class, and who, in their pursuit of

(a) Mark xii. 40.

(b) John xv. 22,

(c) Luke xix, 22.

virtue, will adopt such means only as suit themselves; not the means that are pleasing to God.

They see the necessity of leading a better life: they detest their evil habits: they have already resolved to serve God by imitating Christ: they even propose to themselves *some* means towards this end, but such only as are not opposed to their self-love.

But oh! how badly this system tells! how evil are the effects it produces! for, (1.) They lose the fruit of these Exercises, the higher degree of perfection they might obtain, and the higher degree of future glory they might truly merit. Many are the graces prepared for us, and which slip every day through our hands, because we are not generous with God. Many are the souls whom God would save, and who will not be saved by him.

(2.) Such as these, because of their obstinacy, fall into grievous temptations, into many defects, into protracted tepidity, and, mayhap, the risk of damnation, as some very respectable authors fear happened in the case of that young man whom Jesus bade sell all that he had, and give it to the poor, and come and follow Him (a). This young man was so very perfect that, according to his own account of himself, he had kept all the commandments from his youth; he was anxious moreover to lead a more perfect life, but poverty was a thing he could not bear, and "*he went away sorrowing*". Unhappy wretch, what has become of him!

3. By acting in this fashion, such persons not only fail to avoid, but, on the contrary, multiply a

(a) Matt. xix.

thousandfold, the difficulties which frighten them away from the pursuit of virtue. For they voluntarily put away from them that consoling unction which would have lightened their labours; that grace is withdrawn from them which would have sustained them in their hour of trial; the hope of reward which would have made even difficulties pleasant, is greatly diminished; and God, on the contrary, pours bitterness into the cup of their pleasures, hedges their path with thorns, and places in their way those self-same dangers which they had vainly endeavoured to escape. Who, then, will turn a deaf ear to the call of God, inviting him to work out his salvation by those means which He has appointed for him?

THIRD POINT.

Reflect upon the happiness of those who belong to the *third class*, and who eagerly embrace those means of salvation which God has marked out for them, and which are, consequently, the most opportune of all to reach the desired goal. These look solely to the service of the Lord: perfectly indifferent to all means, they are always on the watch for indications of God's will; and no sooner do they discover them, than they apply themselves promptly to put them into execution. Theirs is no half-hearted compliance with the wishes of their Creator; they make no compacts between Nature and Grace, but they generously rush forward towards greater perfection, treading *those paths only* which God points out to them.

But the great happiness which afterwards falls to their lot may be concluded from this, that (1) they enjoy

the sweetest consolations even in this life, because of the affluence of heavenly favours showered down upon them, and which in some degree emulate the four privileges of the glorified bodies, namely, a *clearness* of intellect in discerning heavenly truths; *agility* in flying to the performance of good works; *subtlety* of memory in representing to themselves heavenly images; and a certain *impassibility* of mind, which is the result of the continual restraint which they place upon their passions.

(2.) They are frequently inundated with such torrents of heavenly delights that, unable to understand how it is, as it were intoxicated, they abandon themselves to holy transports of love, until, overpowered by them, they exclaim: Enough, O Lord, enough; I am unable to endure more.

(3.) God watches with a special Providence over these, His generous servants, loving them as His very dear children, and as the pupil of His eye, and makes everything turn out to their advantage.

The fruit of this meditation is not only a firm resolution to serve God, by imitating Christ in whatever state, or (in the state already chosen) in whatever degree of perfection He shall be pleased to assign to us; but moreover, to labour with all our might to do so by *those very means* which He shall point out, without placing any limits to the operations of His grace.

AFFECTIONS.

O God, my Lord and my Judge, I fear Thy judgments exceedingly. Alas! what answer can I give, when you summon heaven and earth as witnesses against me. Thou shalt charge me in those words,

“Judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?” (a). I called this soul to a high degree of perfection; I pointed out the way to attain it, and supplied the means in abundance, and yet it refused to obey. Your soul ought to be holy, because of its exalted condition. You might have made it holy, even through the efficacy of the Exercises; and yet, *When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes.*” Ah! my God, what answer shall I give to such accusations!

I tremble, and with reason, when I reflect on this terrible pronouncement: *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more”* (b). Oh, what a misfortune would be mine if this Book of the Exercises, which is calculated to prove for me a ladder wherewith to climb to heaven, should on the contrary serve but to precipitate me into hell! But no, O Lord! it shall never be so. Behold me entirely and resolutely determined to execute your command, by using only those means which you shall be pleased to point out to me. I abhor the *wickedness* of those men of the first class who, content with the gratification of their own desires, will adopt no *means* to work out their salvation. I detest the *imprudence* of those of the second class, who will employ *only some of the means*. But I ardently long for *the happiness* of those who belong to the third class, and who, with brave, generous hearts, proclaim themselves ready to adopt *all the means* which you shall point out to them.

(a) Isaias v. 3, 4.

(b) Luke xii. 18.

Here we should fervently implore of the Blessed Virgin, to ask her Divine Son to obtain for us from His Eternal Father all the graces of which we may stand in need.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Reflect on the *sinfulness* of those of the first class who, when urged by God to abandon sin, and be converted, promise to do so, but never carry that promise into effect. Woe to them! for God shall say to them, "*Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant*". You knew that you ought to be converted, and yet you would not. Your sin is, therefore, the greater: and the greater, also, will be your condemnation.

II. Consider the *imprudence* of those of the second class, who are convinced of the necessity of conversion, and resolve, in consequence, to amend their lives, but only by *such means* as please themselves. Oh, what a grievous loss they suffer thereby!

For they lose, (1.) The fruit of the Exercises and an innumerable number of graces. (2.) They fall into very many defects; into a state of almost continual tepidity; and, oftentimes, even into a state of perdition. (3.) They rob themselves of the helps that grace would confer on them to be strong and constant in the path of virtue.

III. Think over the *happiness* of those who belong to the third class, who, by availing themselves of *all the means* which God places at their disposal to enable them to attain to perfection: (1.) *Do attain* to it in a *very* short time; (2.) Persevere with constancy in the practices of a perfect life; (3.) And have as their reward, even in this life, an overflowing torrent

of heavenly delights ever pouring in upon their souls.

CONSIDERATION.

On the Three Degrees of Humility.

S. Ignatius desires that, "before we apply ourselves to the matter of electing a state, we should so dispose our souls as to be sure of gathering from our meditations none other than the genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ; and, with this end in view, he would have us employ the entire of this day in reflecting, with all the earnestness of which we are capable, upon the three following degrees of humility" (a). And this is, simply, in conformity with the dictates of common sense; for, to make a proper choice, one's mind must be free not only from every sinful, but even dangerous, attachment, and must be perfectly indifferent to all things. But since our corrupt nature tends towards what is evil, rather than towards what is good, this stage of indifference can never be reached, unless we cultivate within us a constant yearning after that which is most perfect; and to cultivate this blessed yearning in the most perfect degree possible, is the object of the present consideration on the three degrees of humility.

I. "*The first degree of humility consists in submitting one's-self, without the slightest reserve, to the law of God; so that we should refuse the empire of the entire world, and be prepared even to sacrifice our lives rather than voluntarily violate any command-*

(a) In lib. Exercit., not^a. 3^a, ante tres gradus humilitatis.

ment of God, be it in relation to our Creator or to our fellow-creatures, which binds us under pain of mortal sin" (a): the plain meaning of which is, that I ought rather live in the friendship of Christ, though it should entail on me insults, poverty, and afflictions, than enjoy all that the world has of riches, honours, and pleasures, if the condition of enjoying them were that I should contract the stain of mortal sin. This first degree is the fruit we are supposed to gather during the first week of the exercises, and the motives to incite us thereto, are: 1. *The malice of sin*, which is infinite, because of the sin itself, because of the baseness of him who offends, and because of the infinite majesty of Him who is offended. 2. *The terrible punishment* which followed the sin of Lucifer, and that of our first parents. 3. *The fearful and eternal torments* which yet await sinners in another life.

To these we might add: 1. the *natural equity* which imposes on us the obligation of obeying Him who is our sovereign Lord; for "*It is just to be subject to God*" (b). 2. *The obligation* to do so imposed upon us by the Holy Ghost Himself: "*Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man*" (c). 3. *The rewards* which await the observers of this precept; for "*Evil pursueth sinners, and to the just good shall be repaid*" (d). 4. *The example of the holy martyrs*, who suffered every torment rather than defile themselves by sin; "*They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were*

(a) Direct. xxii. 3 & 4.

(c) Ecclesiastes xii. 13.

(b) Macch. ix. 12.

(d) Proverbs xiii. 21.

put to death by the sword" (a). 5. The necessity of attaining to this degree, in order to work out your salvation; "for if we sin wilfully after having the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins, but a certain dreadful expectation of judgment, and the rage of a fire which shall consume the adversaries" (b).

And have you as yet arrived at this degree? Do you feel that you are really determined to forfeit *jame, honours, health, and even life itself*, rather than offend God by sin? If you have reached this point in the difficult road to perfection, maintain yourself there with inflexible constancy, for if your foot should slip but ever so little, you may find yourself precipitated into hell. Should your progress, however, not have as yet reached so far, strive to gain that goal at once, for not to reach it is to be damned.

II. "The second degree is one of still higher perfection, and consists in our being indifferent to riches or poverty, to honour or disgrace, to health or sickness, to a long life or a short one; and, still more, that no consideration, either of personal interest—how great soever it may be—or of dishonour, or of temporal calamity—even though it involved our instant death—should be powerful enough to draw us to the commission of deliberate venial sin" (c). So that one would prefer to lead in the company of Christ a poor and abject life, full of all sorts of tribulations, rather than purchase, at the price of a single venial sin, whatever riches, and

(a) Hebrews xii. 37.

(b) Hebrews x. 26, 27.

(c) In lib. Exercitiorum.

honours, and pleasures, the world could place within his grasp.

From the very first day of the Exercises we have seen that we are bound to be indifferent, in God's service, to riches and to poverty, to honour or to disesteem, to sickness or to health. We are now asked to come to the conclusion that we should forfeit the highest degree of human happiness, rather than commit even the least venial sin. This will not appear too much if we reflect: 1. That, mortal sin excepted, venial sin is the greatest evil in the world. 2. That God hates it beyond measure. 3. That it infects all our other good actions, diminishes the fervour of our charity, and disposes us to mortal sin. 4. That God punishes it with a very severe punishment.

Now, tell me, what horror have you conceived for venial sin? Search your heart, and tell me honestly whether you would tell a slight lie, if you thought you could thereby rescue yourself from poverty, or disgrace, or death? And what sentiments do you hold regarding indifference to the goods and ills of this life? Is it the same to you to have an abundance of all things, and to be in poverty? to enjoy honours and a life of luxury, as to be in disgrace and difficulties? Come, tell me, what answer does your conscience give you on these points? . . . and yet this degree of perfection, high though it be, was not too high for the noble soul of S. Ignatius, who invites all Christians to embrace not only this high state, but even one still higher.

III. This most sublime of the degrees of humility consists in this: "that even though the glory of God would suffer nothing thereby" (which means

to say, though I might as easily save my soul, and attain the end of my salvation amid honours and riches, as amid poverty and disgrace), “nevertheless I would prefer to be like Christ, poor and despised, and the butt of the world’s mockery, rather than be rich, and honoured, and deemed learned; and this I would desire, solely that I might thereby follow the more closely on the footsteps of the Redeemer” (a). This third degree is the fruit of the exercises of the second week, and especially of the meditations on the “Reign of Christ,” and the “Two Standards”.

The motives which urge us to arrive at this third degree of humility are the following: 1. *The example of Jesus Christ*, who, solely through love of us, embraced a life of poverty, ignominy, and sorrows; who, “*Having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame*” (b). And this he did in order that we, reciprocating His love, might be induced to tread closely on His footsteps, not alone at the sacrifice of riches and honours, when these would be a hindrance to our salvation, but even when these would serve equally well to guide us to our last end, and to help us in working out our salvation.

Now if Jesus Christ, through pure love of you, suffered so very much, submitted to insults of all kinds, became the victim of unspeakable torments, how can you possibly have the heart to deny Him the only consolation it is in your power to afford, and that is to imitate Him in His poverty, and in His labours, and to share with Him the insults that

(a) In lib. Exer. de tribus grad. humilitatis.

(b) Hebrews xii. 2.

He had to bear? If soldiers see their captain the first to lead the storming party and enter the breach, they vie one with the other who shall be the next to follow him; and will you prove such a coward as to be unwilling to follow your King? And yet, in the meditation on the "Reign of Christ," you promised Him, and repeated that promise a hundred times over, "Behold, O Lord of all things, I shall follow Thee, whithersoever Thou goest."

2. The *second* motive impelling us to embrace this degree of humility, is the help towards salvation which the soul derives from making a noble effort to reach this third degree; for a soul which is so generous as to prefer, for the sake of imitating Christ more closely, poverty, sufferings, and contempt, before riches, comforts, and honours, when either state would serve equally well for the purposes of salvation, is not likely, for the sake of such perishable goods, to offend its Creator, I will not say by mortal, but even by venial, sin.

To this powerful motive we may add, that whosoever does not reach this third degree, runs the risk of not remaining firm in the second, or even in the first. For though such a one may be resolved not to sin mortally, or even venially (at least with deliberate intent), though he should be placed in the midst of riches, comforts, and honours, nevertheless every one clearly sees that the difficulty of avoiding many defects is vastly increased, when we are placed in the midst of circumstances which directly tend to open the gate to sins of every description.

It is from this last degree of humility that the general idea, and many of the constitutions of the Society of Jesus took their rise. Amongst these

may be especially mentioned Rule XI. of the summary, in which the members of the Society are directed to abhor entirely, and not merely in part, all that the world loves and sighs for—namely, honours, fame, and a great reputation among men; and to accept and desire with all the powers of their soul, that which Christ our Lord so much loved, and embraced so assiduously—namely, insults, poverty and calumnies.”

Nay more, in the general examination of those who seek admission into the Society (cap. iv. § 44 and 45), S. Ignatius expressly desires that they be asked whether they feel within themselves a desire of this kind: “*An hujusmodi desideria in se sentiant?*” And if it should happen that any one, through human frailty and weakness, cannot say that he has yet conceived such a noble desire, the Saint directs that he be asked whether he has at least a desire to entertain such glorious aspirations; and if the candidate answer in the affirmative, he directs that he be further questioned “whether he has resolved, and is prepared to bear patiently, with the grace of God, all the insults, and injuries, and sufferings, which a close imitation of the life of Christ entails.” Now if S. Ignatius requires so much from those who are but novices, what ought we not to expect from those who have already advanced so far that they are reckoned among the seniors of the Society?

This, then, is the last degree to which the generous athletes of Christ aspire; a degree so sublime that poor human philosophy never dreamt of it, and which can be enjoyed in all its fulness by the humble alone. Wherefore did the Redeemer say: “*I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,*

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (a). This is the best preparation to dispose us for the election of a state—a matter of supreme importance, and one which we shall now apply ourselves to solve in a practical way.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE ON THE ELECTION OF A STATE.

First Prelude. Make a lively act of faith in the presence of God, and with it an acknowledgement that you have been created solely to serve Him, after the manner that He shall make known to you.

Second Prelude. Having in humble prayer made known to God the affair about which you are so anxious, beg of Him the graces necessary to do His will.

Third Prelude. Make acts of absolute indifference regarding the choice of any one state in preference to another, keeping steadily in view one object only, the greater glory of God, and the performance of God's will.

"Whosoever is engaged in making choice of a state, should be perfectly recollected during the time that he is occupied in this concern of supreme interest, and he should be entirely dead to every consideration which has not God and heaven for its object" (b).

I. EXERCISE OF THE WILL,

Called by S. Ignatius the Second Time most favourable for making an Election of State.

The soul, being profoundly humbled, and eagerly

(a) Matt. xi. 25.

(b) Directory, cap. xxxiii. n. 5.

desirous to discover and to execute the will of heaven, should never cease offering herself to God, repeating every now and again, "*Lord, what dost Thou wish me to do? Do you wish me to do this? . . . or that other thing? Speak, Lord.*" And, meanwhile, one should observe and diligently watch the secret movements of his heart, in regard to those different circumstances, suspending, as far as possible, every exercise of the three powers of his soul, so that he may thus be the better enabled to hear and recognise the voice of God.

And here observe, that should you find yourself prompted by natural inclination to adopt one course in preference to another, you should examine all such interior movements by the rules for the discernment of spirits which we shall just now lay down. 2. But if you feel no such interior movement, you must apply yourself to

II. THE EXERCISE OF THE INTELLECT,

Which S. Ignatius calls the Third Time.

I. Here you must balance the reasons for and against any particular state; its advantages and its disadvantages; the helps that you have reason to hope for, and the obstacles you may justly expect to encounter. Weigh well all these reasons, scrupulously and conscientiously, in the balance of the sanctuary, and then offer them up to the most Holy Trinity, to be approved of or rejected as it shall best please God.

II. This being done, put to yourself the following questions: 1. What advice would I give to a friend

on this matter? 2. How would I act myself if I were dying? 3. And if I were about to stand before God's judgment seat? 4. What choice would I wish to have made with eternity in view? When you have thought well on these matters, do that which you would advise another to do, and which you yourself would wish to have done were you at the point of death.

III. One should, however, be careful that "every affection (be it great or small) in regard of the matter to be elected, proceed solely from the love of God" (*a*), rejecting every consideration which savours of the flesh, or the world, and which does not conduce to a closer resemblance to Christ, who ought to be your model, as we have seen in the consideration on the third degree of humility. But this does not forbid you altogether to entertain (in a secondary way) a human motive, if it be a good one; such, for instance, as your own spiritual consolation and peace of heart. But your great concern should be, that your election be guided principally by a desire to do that which may conduce most to the glory of God.

IV. Finally, when you have maturely weighed all the motives that could influence your choice and have banished from your heart every unworthy consideration which might possibly warp your judgment, then elect and determine that which you ought to do or leave undone, to reject or to embrace.

III. CONCLUSION OF THE ELECTION.

I. Having thus taken your resolve, conclude the

(*a*) In lib. Exercit.

affair of election, in presence of the whole court of heaven, by protesting before the most Holy Trinity, whose all-seeing eye penetrates the most hidden secrets of your heart, that your choice has been made solely with a view to God's greater glory, and your own greater good. 2. You must offer up your choice to Jesus Christ, through the hands of Mary Immaculate, asking them to witness it, and begging of them to confirm it, and seal it with their blessing. 3. Invite the saints to join you in thanking the Most High, for having made known to you His will, and ask them to obtain from Him the necessary grace to fulfil it. To this end, select one amongst them to be your particular advocate.

II. Afterwards employ yourself in vocal or mental prayer, and be particular in observing whether you receive any new lights or fresh impulses of grace to confirm you in your resolution, or to induce you to alter it. If you find that you are but the more confirmed in it, you may take this as a proof that your election was a good one. Should the result of your prayer suggest an opposite conclusion, then you must examine whether the interior movements you have experienced proceed from the Spirit of Light, or from the spirit of darkness. If you have reason to believe that they proceed from the evil one, you should not change the choice you have made; but if you have just cause to think that they come from God, you must once more apply yourself to the business of examination. But if nothing remarkable has occurred while you were engaged in making your election, you may regard it as a proof that God has been pleased to make his will known to you through the mere operation of the intellect.

III. Should it chance to happen that, in "the second time," the will should lean to a particular choice, and afterwards, in "the third time," moved by the arguments of the intellect, should find itself impelled in an opposite direction, you must examine whether the arguments of the intellect are solid, and if they be, you must be guided by them, because in the first case there is no full certainty that the impulse comes from God, and consequently the guidance of the intellect is more secure, and more in conformity with our nature. But should the arguments of the intellect appear weak, while the movements of the will are strong, and highly indicative of the call of God, the opposite course must be pursued.

IV. RULES FOR THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS.

I. Should you feel yourself inclined to adopt one course of action in preference to another, examine whether the movements which influence you will fill you with spiritual consolation and peace; whether you will find them an incentive to virtue; or, whether they do not, on the contrary, cause you trouble, annoyance, and sadness, and serve as an inducement to tepidity. If they are of the first mentioned class, you may regard them as coming from God; if of the second, they bear the mark of the infernal tempter.

II. Examine, moreover, the beginning, the middle, and the end of these movements of the soul. As regards their *beginning*, or origin, reflect whether you began to feel them for the first time in moments of fervour, spiritual consolation, and peace;

or rather, whether they first manifested themselves during a period of spiritual disquietude, sorrow, and desolation. Also, whether they came into your head as it were by stealth, in order to distract you from prayer, or from the due performance of duties imposed upon you by obedience. If they be of the latter class, most assuredly they do not come from God, who is the author and fountain of order and of peace. 2. In their *middle* stage, consider if your soul remains tranquil, and your intellect clear, or otherwise. 3. As regards their *final* stage, reflect whether they leave in your soul an ardent desire to advance with confidence in the paths of perfection; or whether they may not have affected you with a spirit of sloth, of disgust for spiritual things, and a gloomy feeling of sadness. The first-mentioned signs are manifestations of the Spirit of God; those mentioned in the second instance, indicate that the feelings you experience have the devil for their author.

But, above all things, have recourse to prayer: there you will find light to guide your intellect, and strength to confirm your will in its good resolutions. Be careful, however, in your moments of spiritual consolation not to make any vow; and you should also abstain from making any resolutions in moments of spiritual desolation. Let your endeavours be all directed to acquiring a spirit of tranquillity, which is the mother of wise counsels. Be particular, moreover, to disclose the state of your soul with all candour to your spiritual director, and to be guided by his advice.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Prerogatives of the Third Degree of Humility.

FIRST POINT.

Consider, first, *its excellence*. For what can be more heroic than to wish to be despised, poor, and afflicted, in imitation of Jesus Christ, rather than be surrounded by riches, pleasures, and honours, even though in either state the *glory given to God*, and your own *merit*, would be the same? 2. What greater generosity of soul can one display, than in wishing to bind his brow with a crown of thorns rather than with one of roses, in order thus to imitate Christ the more perfectly? 3. Can anything be so sublime as to abhor and fly from that which the world so intensely loves and so eagerly covets; and, on the other hand, to love and ardently long for that which the world so carefully shuns, and so entirely abhors and detests? For if the just man in affliction is a spectacle worthy the eye of God Himself, how great in His sight will that person be, who not only endures patiently, like Job, poverty, loss of reputation, and corporal afflictions, but even, like the apostle, anxiously longs for such things? O Lord, grant that I may not fall short of the sublime aspirations of the children of God!

SECOND POINT.

Consider *its happiness*. The soul which has attained the third degree of humility enjoys, in a

marked degree, even in this life, the peace of the blessed ; for what can sadden that heart which seeks for poverty, loves labour, and is ambitious of contempt? 2. It is ever near Christ, who is the centre of all happiness and all glory ; for, in closest resemblance to Him, it is ever clad in His own special garment, and partakes of His own particular food ; and sharing His lot, it shares with Him also the special favours and love of the Eternal Father. 3. It constitutes the Paradise of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where, beneath the shadow of the tree of the cross, He loves to share in its delights all day long. 4. It is the most fitting instrument to promote the glory of God, for "*the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise*" (a). And, in the eyes of the world, what can possibly be more foolish and weaker than the third degree of humility? Oh ! who, then, will not wish to aspire to such happiness? Who?

THIRD POINT.

Consider its *utility*, for this third degree is *the most certain* way of salvation, since it withdraws us from those innumerable dangers which are inseparable from honours and riches. 2. It is *the shortest* means to arrive at perfection, because it frees the soul from every sinful affection, and enriches it with the most precious virtues ; it leads us directly to a likeness to Jesus Christ, in which all true sanctity consists. 3. It is the *most meritorious*, because of the continual occasion of suffering which con-

(a) 1. Cor. i. 27.

tempt, poverty, and trials place in our path, and because of the strong motives for practising the most sublime virtues which so often have their origin in this state. 4. Moreover, a soul which has reached this degree reposes with the most perfect tranquillity in the bosom of Divine Providence ; it leads upon earth a heavenly life, far surpassing everything in this world, and approximating to the life of the angels ; and since its will is ever conformed to the will of God, it always lives in accordance with the wishes of God, and consequently in the enjoyment of the most perfect peace. 5. Finally, it awaits with a feeling of the most perfect confidence the fulfilment of the Divine promise : “ *Amen, I say to you, that you who have left all things, and have followed me, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting* ” (a). And who is it that leaves all things and follows Jesus Christ most closely, if not the person who has reached the third degree of humility ? And what, then, will not their reward be ?

AFFECTIONS.

I believe, O Lord, that “ Blessed are the poor in spirit ; that blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake ; that blessed are they whom men revile, and against whom they speak all that is evil, untruly ” (b). And all this I believe with a most firm faith, because Thou, who art infinite truth and wisdom, hast proclaimed it. O what a treasure lies hidden in the third degree of humility ! For how

(a) Matt. xix. 28, 29.

(b) Matt. v. 3, et seq.

many graces am I not indebted to Thee, because Thou hast made it known to me.

I venerate, and lovingly embrace, insults, trials, and poverty, as so many portions of Thy cross, sanctified by Thy precious blood. O how late have I come to know their value! . . . Truly do I lament my past blindness, which has led me to love and to esteem vanities. Henceforward I shall be wiser, nor shall I ever again wish to be more comfortably circumstanced than Thou wert, my Lord and Master. And while Thy life was spent "*in labour and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness*" (a), it would be a shame should I, thy disciple and servant, wish to live otherwise. No; from this hour forward, poverty shall be my dearest treasure, a lowly state my highest dignity, tribulation my most cherished delight. Thus have I resolved within myself, and this resolve, with Thy grace, I shall carry out during the entire course of my life.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Consider *the generosity and excellence of the third degree.*

There is nothing more sublime, more magnanimous, more heroic, than to refuse (though we might have them) riches, pleasures, and honours; and to desire and seek in their stead, poverty, afflictions, and insults, for the sole reason of becoming more like to Christ.

II. Think upon *the happiness* which it implies. For (1) Those who attain to this degree enjoy a fore-

(a) 2 Cor. xi. 27.

taste of Paradise. (2.) They are near the source of all happiness—Christ—whom they are incessantly striving to imitate. (3.) The attainment of this degree is the sweetest consolation we can offer to the heart of Jesus ; and, (4.) Lastly, it is the means best suited to win souls to God.

III. Reflect upon its *utility*. (1.) It is the surest path by which we may attain perfection, and the salvation of our souls. (2.) It is a most fruitful source of acts meritorious of eternal life. (3.) It makes our desires conformable to the Divine will ; and, (4.) Finally, there is promised to those who embrace it an eternal reward.

Seventh Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On what Jesus Christ suffered in his honour ; and how such suffering tends to instruct us.

TO THE READER.

ONE ought to meditate on the mysteries of the passion of Christ, (1.) as if he were actually present at that awful spectacle ; (2.) as if Jesus suffered solely on his account, and because of his personal sins ; (3.) as if the Redeemer had offered to the Eternal Father, for him alone, the agonies He was forced to undergo. Then, the fruit to be gathered from the meditation is a greater firmness in keeping one's self in the third degree of humility, that is to say, in wishing to live in poverty, contempt, and affliction, merely for the sake of bearing a closer resemblance to Jesus Christ.

FIRST POINT.

Consider the *insults* that Jesus had to endure. First, He received a *blow* ; and three circumstances conspire to make this insult outrageous beyone measure, viz. : (1.) The infinite *dignity* of the person so insulted, for He was God ; (2.) The *abject condition*

of the offender, who was but a vile menial. (3.). The *cruelty* of the act, for it was inflicted with a glove of steel. And why this outrage? merely for an answer replete with heavenly wisdom! O my God! that you should receive a blow! You! And from so mean a hand. So horrified are the Holy Fathers of the Church at this act, that they confess themselves amazed why the earth did not open at that moment to devour the miscreant; why the sun still continued to shed its rays, and why the entire universe was not again thrown back into *chaos*.

Secondly, Christ was *scoffed at*. Consider (1.) who it is that was so treated; (2.) and by whom; (3.) and after what fashion. He who was thus insulted was the Son of God, the glory of the Eternal Father, the Supreme Monarch of heaven and of earth; and yet He is most ignominiously reviled by a vile, base, cowardly rabble; they blindfold Him; they spit upon His face; they pluck His beard; they kick Him; and in fact exhaust all the methods of insult which the most fertile imagination could devise; and not only is He made sport of by the mob, but, clad in the dress of a buffoon, He is forced to endure the sneers of Herod's courtiers, and the insulting remarks of the Scribes and Jewish priests, and the gibes of the officers. Oh! what a wonderful spectacle of humility and of patience!

Thirdly, Christ was *held of less esteem than Barabbas*.

And here reflect, likewise, (1.) who is it that is held of less esteem; (2.) and in comparison with whom; (3.) and under what circumstances. The God of Infinite Majesty is ranked with a wretched

malefactor; the Giver of every good gift is placed in the same balance with a brigand; the Author of Life is paired with a murderer; and to the former there is allotted the most infamous of deaths—that of the cross. And to make the insult the greater, His sentence was public and unanimous. The people, the nobles, the doctors of the law, the priests, all voted for it; and as though the blood of Christ were that of a murderer, they, with one accord, exclaimed: “*His blood be upon us and upon our children*”.

Fourthly, the innocent Redeemer is assailed by the most outrageous calumnies. He is called a blasphemer, one possessed by the devil, a Samaritan, a drunkard, one who would destroy the Temple; an ambitious man, and one of rebellious disposition, who would drive the people to destruction. And here we must consider the false nature of the accusations, the infamous character of those who made them, the injustice of those who were placed in the tribunals to administer justice, and, finally, the world-wide reputation of the Redeemer for virtues directly opposed to the vices of which He was accused.

SECOND POINT.

Consider, and, while considering, admire the *silence* with which Jesus endured those many insults. One might have expected that the Divine Justice would have armed every creature to avenge such misdeeds; or, at the very least, that Jesus would have employed His Divine eloquence in His own defence. But it is quite otherwise. Jesus forgives, Jesus is silent. “*He was as a deaf man that heareth not, and as a*

dumb man not opening his mouth, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth" (a).

But, my Jesus, there were very grave reasons why Thou shouldst speak in thy own defence ; for, (1.) The falsehood of your accusers was evident, "*for the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus, that they might put Him to death ; and they found not, whereas many false witnesses had come in*" (b). (2.) Next, the discrepancy in the evidence was notorious, for we read "*that their witnesses did not agree*" (c). (3.) The judge himself had to acknowledge your innocence, saying : "*I find no cause in this Man*" (d). (4.) For he was quite aware of the jealousy of the Jews, "*For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him up out of envy*" (e). (5.) Yet his eagerness for our salvation prevailed, "*and from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him*". But, nevertheless, (O astounding humility !) "*He answered Him never a word*".

O holy angels ! the most innocent Jesus is accused of so many enormous crimes, before so many judges, in the sight of the entire world. He has such immense reputation ; and yet, at this moment, imminent danger hangs above His head ; and the scourges, the thorns, the nails, and the Cross surround Him. Yet, notwithstanding all this, He is silent. "*But Jesus held his peace*" (f). But every right demands that we should defend our reputation and life ? The falsehood of the accusations against Jesus is so evident—the character of His accusers

(a) Ps. xxxvii. 14, 15.

(c) Mark xiv. 59.

(e) Mark xv. 30.

(b) Matt. xxvi. 60.

(d) Luke xxiii. 4.

(f) Matt. xxvi. 63.

stands out in such clear and luminous colours—that He has merely to open His lips in order to confound them. Ah! but by the dishonours heaped upon Himself Jesus wished to atone for your sins—for your pride—and therefore it is that we find it recorded of Him in Holy Writ: “*But Jesus held his peace*”.

THIRD POINT.

1. Detest the habit of defending yourself with impatience when you have to endure similar afflictions. Come hither, look upon Jesus, learn, and be silent. What! do you presume to compare your own innocence with that of Jesus; the accusations levelled against you, with those crushing ones heaped upon Jesus; the motives you have for self-defence with those which Jesus had? Contrast the losses which you may have to fear, with the calamities which you have seen pouring down upon Him; yet He is silent, and you? Ah! let your querulous speech put you to the blush.

2. Examine, moreover, of what great advantage it will be to yourself to keep silent; with how many graces God will reward your silence, even in this life; with what tenderness He will lift you up on the last day; to what happiness He will conduct you in heaven! Do you fancy that S. John of the Cross, S. Peter the Martyr, S. Francis Regis, S. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, S. Francis de Sales, and so many other saints, now regret having in life endured in silence so many calumnies?

3. Consider that your complaints, your excuses, your mad anxiety to vindicate your reputation, serve, not unfrequently, but to increase your disgrace;

for, while, by manifesting this impatience, you become regarded with a feeling of disesteem by others, you at the same time, lose the reputation of virtue, the merit of silence, peace of soul, and an increase of glory.

4. Abhor that *ambitious pride* which causes you to covet honours so eagerly, while you dread contempt. What! I receive a blow—He is insulted and mocked, as though He were the very vilest of men; finally, He is thought more worthy of death than a notorious malefactor; and we, worms of the earth, slaves of sin, cannot endure to be touched by a single reproachful word; we, at the slightest offence, burst out into expressions of rage and indignation; and, even when the veriest trifles are at stake, we will not suffer anyone to be placed before us. Ah! let us blush for so much pride, and, taught by the example of Jesus Christ, let us learn to endure insult and derision in peace and silence.

AFFECTIONS.

O my Jesus! all bruised and beaten as thou art, thus clothed all over with insults, made the last of men and the outcast of the people, I adore thee as my Lord and my God, my King and my Captain. For so long a period have my eyes been accustomed to behold Thee in this abject condition, that, on this account, I the more closely recognise in Thee the Divinity, and the more affectionately do I love thy sacred humanity. For my single sake, it was lowered to the dishonour of such infamy; for my sake did it die amidst so great agonies. O love! O love!

For pity sake, O Eternal Father, why didst Thou permit that thy Eternal Son should annihilate Himself so? for to *me* were those insults due—to me, who have sinned, and by my pride have so often and so grievously offended thy Infinite Majesty. Upon me, then, let insults and ignominy rain down, and spend the fury of their violence—“*What evil hath this man done*” (a) Ah! I understand it all. You, my Jesus, wished, even at so great a price, to teach me to trample on my pride, and to love humility. Yes, I love it, and shall ever continue to love it. Yes, I shall ever account blessed the poor in spirit, and all such as are despised. Yes I regard as vanities, the honours, the fame, and the glory of all human greatness. And, therefore, do Thou, O my Jesus, receive the protestations of my repentance, by which I am intensely grieved because I allowed my heart to fill with pride, for having coveted honours, and for having abhorred humiliations.

Henceforward I shall bear every, every injury, every calumny, every insult—not alone in silence, but with a holy joy. “*I will make myself meaner than I have done: and I will be little in mine own eyes*” (b). Do Thou grant me the grace: and since Thou knowest my weakness do Thou encourage me, and make me brave to conquer the assaults of my pride.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Consider the *insults* which Jesus suffered. (1.) He received a *blow*. Who received it? By whom was it inflicted? In what manner?

(a) Luke xxiii. 22.

(b) 2 Reg. vi. 22.

. . . . (2.) He was *scoffed at*. . . . Who? By whom? in what manner? (3.) He was held of less account than Barabbas. Who was? God! And in comparison with whom? A cut-throat who lay under sentence of death! He was defamed with calumnies of the blackest hue, being accused as a blasphemer, one possessed of the devil, and a subverter of the public order.

II. Admire the silence with which Jesus endured all these insults. He might have defended himself, and he had sufficiently grave reasons for doing so. A single word would have saved Him—nay more, would have secured him a triumph over his enemies, and, instead of infamy, he would have reaped immense glory. Nevertheless Jesus is silent.

III. Observe how much your conduct is opposed to this. Jesus is silent when there is every reason why He should speak; you speak even when you ought to be silent. (2.) Reflect on the advantages you will reap by bearing with injuries in silence; and (3.) The losses you will sustain by complaining of them. (4.) Detest your *pride*, which leads you to desire honours, and to fly contempt, and learn from the example of Jesus Christ the greatest of the virtues—humility.

LECTURE.

On the fruit of the Exercises of this Day.

In the third week of the exercises (to which this day corresponds), “We should renew and confirm the choice of a better life, which we have already made, and our desire to serve God henceforward

more perfectly, by placing before ourselves the great example of the passion of our Redeemer" (a). By which words the "Directory" declares (1.) the *fruit* which we seek to gather from the exercise of this day; (2) and the *means* which Saint Ignatius proposes for our adoption in order to obtain it. The former consists in that firm constancy in our good choice on which we resolved yesterday. The latter consists in a loving remembrance of the passion of Christ. Behold the prudence with which S. Ignatius always connects the end with the means! Behold the eminently useful end which he proposes to us! See the useful means which he would have us adopt, in order to obtain it.

That we cannot aim at anything more useful than constancy in good, we know from the *difficulty* of the thing chosen, and the natural fickleness of *him who makes the choice*—both which combined constitute an immediate danger of abandoning the good choice which we have made, and relapsing into our former state of life. Wherefore S. Francis Xavier wrote of himself, that it is one thing to form generous resolutions, and to propose to ourselves noble and heroic deeds for the future; but it is quite another thing to find oneself already face to face with the trial, standing to one's arms, and braving every peril. Where at first all things seemed easy, now every charge shatters, every blow wounds, every danger terrifies. This we see clearly exemplified in the case of our Lord's Apostles, who were magnificent in their promises, and valiant in speech, saying to Jesus Christ, each one on his own behalf: "Yea,

(a) "Directory," cap. 35, n. 1.

though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee" (a). But when the crisis came, these solemn words proved meaningless, and Peter denied his Master, while all the others abandoned Him.

Thus it not unfrequently happens to those, also, who during the period of the exercises seemed prepared to raise up a most sublime edifice of perfection, and who, a short time after, as if they had built the foundations upon the shifting sand, see each generous resolution of theirs go to ruin; wherefore, covered with shame because of their weakness, and looking up to the great height from which they had fallen, they remain a miserable spectacle of human inconstancy. S. Ignatius, then, foreseeing these falls, employs to-day the most powerful means to keep us firm in the resolutions which we formed yesterday, when engaged in the choice of a state; and above all to be steadfast and persevering in the practice of the third degree of humility, as the essential fruit of the exercises. And he believes that, for this purpose, we cannot possibly employ a means more secure, more active, or more efficacious than to place before our eyes the example of the passion of Jesus Christ.

Since *sensuality* and *pride* are for us "*a lion in the way, and a lioness in the roads*" (b), which frighten us, and turn us back from the path of virtue, assuredly we cannot find more powerful arms to subdue these two monsters than the sorrows borne, and the insults suffered by Christ. And as S. Ignatius in the preceding week prepared us to arrive at the third degree of humility, by placing

(a) Matt. xxi. 35.

(b) Proverbs xxvi. 13.

before us for meditation the virtues which Jesus Christ exercised in His private life, so now to make us persevere in this third degree, and carry out courageously what we have already resolved to perform, he places before us, as an example, the history of the sufferings of Jesus, in which he luminously unfolds to us the virtues of fortitude, patience, and humility.

For here precisely it is that our Divine Captain carries out what He had promised to do in the meditation on the kingdom of Christ—namely, that He Himself would always be the first in the battle, the first in encountering labours, vigils, scoffs, poverty, and trials. We now see raging that war which, in the meditation on the two standards, He had proclaimed against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and we see Him already engaged in fighting valiantly with the enemy, to subdue and break down in us the rebellious appetites of the senses and of self-love. Moreover, He exhibits to us a most perfect example of the men of the third class, since He not only desires poverty, insults, and affliction, but even embraces them with affection; and, overcoming their opposites, He of His own free choice elects the third degree of humility. All these considerations tend but to one end—that we, also, should inflame our hearts with generous emulation, and that the recollection of all Jesus has suffered for us should be a most effective spur, to make us run on with vigour and earnestness in the way of perfection.

And in truth, who, while looking upon Jesus carrying His cross amidst so much ignominy, will be so mean and poor-hearted as to covet honours, and shrink back affrightened at the bare mention of

contempt? The saints nerved themselves for deeds of courage, of strength, of heroic sacrifice, by meditating continually on the passion of Jesus. This was the whetstone on which they ground their arms; at this fire they renewed the heat that was dying out; here they acquired fresh strength when they began to grow languid; when cast down, they arose again; and when on the point of being vanquished, they here recovered courage to fight more vigorously against the enemy, and eventually triumphed over the conqueror.

From what has been said, it is evident that S. Ignatius could not direct the exercises of the third week to a more useful *end*, than to maintain ourselves with *constancy* in that degree of perfection of which we made choice yesterday; nor could he propose a more efficacious *means* to attain it, than the memory of the passion of Christ, in which he principally makes us meditate the *outrages* and *sorrows* which He endured therein, in order thus to animate us to subdue in ourselves *sensuality* and *pride*.

§ II.

I. In order to gather the desired fruit from these meditations, we must consider in each mystery the six following point:—viz. (1.) the *person* who suffers; (2.) the *torments* which He endures; (3.) and (4.) *by whom* and *for whom*, He is tortured; (5.) the *reason* why He undergoes such a martyrdom; (6.) the *manner* in which our most loving Saviour is thus brutally tormented.

And 1. In the *person* of Christ who suffers such

anguish, we must admire His infinite dignity ; for He is *the brightness of God's glory, and the figure of his substance*" (a) ; the King of kings, the Lord of the angels, the Creator of all things. Add to this His *innocence* and His *sanctity*, and then tell me whether you do not feel your soul moved to pity, at seeing Him led out to undergo such terrible tortures.

2. As regards the *torments* which He is forced to endure, reflect upon their *number* and their *atrociousness*. He suffered in *every* member, and He suffered the most acute pain ; He suffered also in His reputation, and to such a degree as to be looked upon as the scum of men, a worm, and a curse to the earth ; He suffered in His soul, and the sword of sorrow pierced His very inmost heart.

3. As regards his *persecutors*—see how *numerous* they are, how *enraged* and *ferocious*. The *King*, Herod, scoffs at Him ; the *Judge*, Pilate, condemns Him ; the *priests*, Annas and Caiphas, rebuke Him ; the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* act as His accusers ; the *soldiers* turn Him into ridicule ; the *executioners* scourge and crucify Him.

4. Consider the *unworthiness*, the *ingratitude*, and the *wickedness* of *men*, for whom Jesus suffered so much. They are *unworthy*, because rebels to His law ; *ungrateful*, because they cast away from them the price of so much blood with which they were redeemed ; and *impious*, because by sinning continually they crucify again their loving Redeemer, and make a mockery of Him.

5. The *cause* or end for which Jesus exposed

(a) Hebrews i. 3.

Himself to such and so many sufferings was not His own good but ours ; not any advantage to be reaped by Him, but by us ; that is, to satisfy Divine justice for our sins.

6. Finally, the *manner* in which Jesus endured those tortures was eminently perfect. For He suffered of His own free will : “*He was offered, because it was his own will*” (a), and with an ardent desire of suffering : “*I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized ; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished*” (b) ; and in silence : “*He held his peace, and answered nothing*” (c) ; and with the greatest patience, for “*he gave his body to the strikers, and his cheeks to them that plucked them*” (d).

Add to what has been said that on this occasion Jesus exercised in a heroic degree all the most exalted virtues—poverty of spirit, humility, meekness, fortitude, obedience, charity, and the love of His enemies. O sweetest Jesus, who will be able to comprehend “*what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth*” (e) of all the virtues which you practised, and of all the pains and sorrows which you suffered during the time of your passion.

II. From the thorough consideration of these six points to-day, there ought to flow, as from a fountain, the following affections : (1.) Of *compassion* towards Jesus, who so lovingly endured so many torments for our sake ; (2.) Of *hatred* and *horror* for sin, which could not be duly atoned for except at the price of the blood of the Son of God. (3.) Of *admiration* of the exceeding goodness and wisdom of

(a) Isa. liii. 7. (b) Luke xii. 50. (c) Mark xiv. 61.
 (d) Isa. l. 6. (e) Ephes. iii. 18.

the Lord, who found the fitting means to blend in such a wonderful manner justice and mercy. (4.) *Of hope of our eternal salvation*; “for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life” (a). (5.) *Of love of God*, who loved us so much as to give His only-begotten Son for our salvation. (6.) *Of zeal for the salvation of souls*, whom God valued so highly, loved so much, and purchased at so dear a price.

But we should observe, with regard to these affections, that it is not necessary that we should excite ourselves to all of them in every meditation, but let each one stir up within himself those which are most useful for his spiritual profit, and which principally tend to lead him to a solid perfection of life, by means of a constant imitation of Christ in the third degree of humility.

III. But in order that the exercise of the intellect also, united to that of the will, may reap the desired fruit, the following rules are to be observed:—

1. We must propose the suffering of Christ to our mind in a manner so vivid as to seem to ourselves to be present at that mystery, and actually to behold it with our very eyes; so that we might fancy that we heard the whistling of the whips, the blows of the bludgeons, the shouts of the executioners, the words of the Redeemer; to feel in ourselves the wounds produced by the blows, the pricks of the thorns, the piercing of the nails; to taste the vinegar and gall; to touch the rough, stiff chains

and ropes ; to see the pale, livid face of Jesus, covered with filth, smeared all over with spittle, and dust, and blood. In one word, we should strive that "*this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus (a)*."

2, Moreover, let each one of us say to himself— "Jesus suffered all this for me, and for me individually. He died as much for me alone as for all men. At the moment of His death He thought of me individually, He prayed for me, and offered up to His Eternal Father for me the sacrifice which He was consummating on the cross. Nay more, even as He descended from heaven to die for all men, so would He have descended to die for me alone, had this been necessary. In such manner that I may say with the apostle. "*He delivered himself for me*" (b) ; and that sin of mine [N], and that other [N], caused Him such distress, that it forced Him to sweat blood in the garden, it lacerated His flesh at the pillar, it nailed Him to the cross, it tore open His sacred side.

3. We should never lose sight of the third degree of humility, and all the meditations should be directed in an especial manner to those points, in which we have already resolved to imitate, in that third degree, the most noble example of Jesus Christ.

§ III.

Observe that to-day, principally, it is necessary to keep the soul in a state of holy sadness ; that is, not only not to occupy it with joyous, even though

(a) Philip. ii. 5.

(b) Gal. ii. 20.

pious, imaginations; but to cultivate therein that silent sorrow which may pierce it through, and to nourish there that holy horror, which should seize it on contemplating the bloody spectacle presented by the scene of the Redeemer's crucifixion. For this end you should close the windows, and, drawing down the blinds, keep the room in that state of darkness which contributes so much to the interior recollections of the soul. Refresh yourself from time to time with touching passages from the Scriptures, chosen from the Psalms and the Prophets.

2. Increase somewhat your exercises of exterior penance; for it is fitting that, while contemplating the sufferings of Christ, we, too, should "*bear about in our bodies the mortification of Jesus*" (a). Diminish somewhat the quantity of your food, or abstain, either entirely or in part, from some delicacy which is particularly palatable. It is also a wise counsel to determine before dinner the quantity of food which you will take, and not to go beyond this limit without necessity. In fact, during the time of meals, we should keep before our eyes Jesus at supper with His disciples, we should observe His behaviour, and how He acts in respect of food and drink.

For the rest, as the fruit of the last meditation was to wish to be *despised* with Jesus, and to live in *contempt* rather than surrounded by honours, the fruit of the following meditation will be to wish, to live *afflicted* with Jesus, amid tribulations rather than enjoyment, solely in order to bear a closer resemblance to Him.

(a) 2 Cor. iv. 10.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On what Christ suffered in His body, and on the manner in which He suffered for our instruction.

FIRST POINT.

Consider the *pains* which Jesus suffered in His body. First of all, He was most cruelly torn with *scourges*. How terrible this butchery must have been we may infer, first, (1.) from *tenderness of his flesh*, which was so delicate that, as S. Bonaventure says, the sole of His foot was more sensitive than the pupil of our eye ; add to this that He was extremely weak because of His bloody sweat, worn out after His terrible agony, and exhausted in the last degree after the sleeplessness and sufferings of that dreadful night.

2. From the *fury of the executioners*, who, by their natural dispositions, were fierce and cruel ; who were, moreover, urged on to their brutal task by the money of the Jews, incited by the demons, and relieved each other from time to time to the number of twenty couples, as was revealed to Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi.

3. From the *quality of the scourges*, which were fresh, thorny rods, whips made from the sinews of oxen, and iron chains studded with spikes, which tore that immaculate flesh into small pieces.

4. From the *number of the blows*, which, as Saint Bernard asserts, amounted to 6,666. From all this you may infer what must have been the agony of Jesus under such inhuman tortures.

O my Jesus ! Pilate caused you to be thus cruelly

flogged, in order to awaken in your behalf the compassion of the hard-hearted Jews; and I see you wounded all over your body, covered with blood for my sake, yet, nevertheless, harder than flint, I do not breathe a single sigh, I do not shed even one tear in payment for so many oceans of blood. Nay, worse still, although my sensuality has been to you the cause of so many tortures, I continue, nevertheless, to pamper my flesh.

Secondly. *He was crowned with thorns.* This, also, was a most excruciating torture; (1.) because of the *sharpness* and *number* of the thorns which pierced His head in so many parts; (2.) because of the especial *tenderness* of the head, which is the most sensitive portion of the body, nay, the very seat of the organs of sense; (3.) because of the *cruelty* of the executioners, who, with blows of canes, forced the sharp thorns through His temples; (4.) because of the violent manner in which He was stripped of his garments, which having already adhered to His wounds now re-opened them, and made them bleed afresh.

O my Jesus! you are crowned with thorns, and I wish to wear a garland of roses! You add sorrow to sorrow, while I shrink from the slightest annoyance! Ah! this shall not be any longer. I will not continue a delicate member beneath a head crowned with thorns. I will not only support with patience the afflictions which you may send me, but of my own accord I will commence to punish myself with voluntary penances.

Thirdly. *He Himself carries his cross.* This, also was a most painful trial for Jesus; (1.) because of the overpowering weight of that beam; (2.) because

of the length and ruggedness of the road ; (3.) because of the steep ascent of Mount Calvary ; (4.) because of His physical weakness ; and so great was the torture which Jesus suffered from that weight, that, staggering at every step, and dashing His bare feet against every stone that lay across his path, He fell fainting upon the road. Having been forcibly pulled into an upright position by means of ropes, and the violent efforts of the executioners, who seized His long, flowing hair, He was, nevertheless, unable to continue standing, and fell breathless and exhausted beneath the cross, so that it became necessary that Simon the Cyrenean should bear it the remainder of the journey.

O my Jesus ! through love of me you suffer so much ; you groan beneath this terrible weight, and I, casting off the mild yoke of thy law, wish to run on through life, unencumbered ; the slightest labour annoys me, and I desire nothing but my own convenience ; But I am now ashamed of my base conduct ! Henceforward, I shall labour as far as my strength permits ; I shall endure whatever sufferings you may be pleased to send me ; and, animated by thy example, I, too, shall carry my cross generously, and with perseverance.

SECOND POINT.

I. Consider the manner in which Christ endures such atrocious tortures ; and (1.) He endures them in *patient silence*. The executioners far exceed the number of lashes permitted by the law, and yet He is silent. The soldiers crown Him with thorns through mere wanton cruelty, and He utters not a

word. He alone is forced to carry His cross, and yet He does not complain.

2. He suffers with the greatest *alacrity*, and with a *desire* of enduring still more. While they were raining down the blows upon His back, He said: "*I am ready for scourges*" (a). While the thorns were piercing Him, He offered His head to the most agonising pains; and on beholding the cross He saluted it, He embraced it, and pressed it lovingly to His bosom.

3. He suffers with the greatest *love* towards His Eternal Father, whose kingdom He restored by enduring such torments; towards sinners, whose salvation He purchased with His blood; towards you, whom He had specially present before His mind up to the last moment of His agony; and, although He foresaw your ingratitude, your malice, your crimes, nevertheless, He kept in store for you that grace which would have finally converted you.

II. Consider the *fruit* which you ought to gather from all this. Come hither, lift up your eyes to that cross; look at those thorns which pierce the head of the dying Jesus; behold those most holy limbs, all livid, stripped of the flesh, and torn with lashes; see those nails which pin Him to that rough wood; and then, if you have the heart to do so, go pamper your body, crown your head with roses, live in sensual indulgence and refined luxury, and fly from all labour and every annoyance. Are you not the person who, yesterday, promised Jesus that you were willing to follow Him in every undertaking, to fight beneath His standard, to use those

(a) Ps. xxxvii. 18.

arms, that clothing, and that food which He would use? Ah! if Jesus had broken His promise to you, and, instead of expiring in such agony, had descended from the cross, what would have become of you?

Come, then, arise, and follow *your* King and your Lord; amend the past, and form generous resolutions for the future:—(1.) By means of penances and holy fervour, reduce your body and its rebellious appetites to subjection. (2.) Endure with pleasure, and in holy silence, sickness and other afflictions. (3.) Labour like a good soldier of Christ for your own perfection, and the sanctification of your neighbour. (4.) Cast into the bosom of God all anxiety regarding your health, and leave it in His hands to shorten or prolong your life, to make it pass in health or in sickness. Believe me—and you shall soon prove the truth of my assertion by experience—to serve this loving Lord, and to suffer for Him is a delightful thing—all sweetness, all comfort. Say to Him, then, generously, with S. Teresa: “*Either to suffer or to die*;” or if you wish for still higher perfection, say to Him, with S. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi: “*To suffer, not to die.*”

AFFECTIONS.

Of compassion. Oh, how do I behold Thee, my most loving Redeemer! how do I behold thee! “*From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness in thee*” (a). Thou art one great wound all over; and the blood, and the mire, and the filth have effaced in thee every appearance of man, and have robbed thee of that heavenly

(a) Isa. i. 6.

beauty which adorned thee. Poor Jesus ! and can I behold thee led to so much suffering, and yet feel no sentiment of compassion ? What kind of heart must mine be ? A hard heart, a heart of flint, an iron heart. And my eyes—do they refuse to shed even a single tear ? . . . Ah Jesus, for what a monster thou hast suffered !

Of sorrow. What did I when I granted to this flesh of mine those sensual pleasures ! Ah Jesus ! Ah Jesus ! I then scourged Thee, I crowned Thee with thorns, I gave Thee gall to drink, I nailed Thee to the cross. Ah ! my heart, dissolve thyself in tears, and burst forth into lamentations of the most intense grief. . . . Yes, my Jesus, I repent of having offended Thee. . . . O accursed sin, who hast been the executioner of my Lord, . . . I shall hate thee eternally.

Of love. O my most innocent Saviour ! you suffer these tortures not only *at my hands*, but *for me*, . . . for me, filth and worms. And in the midst of your torments, you loved me with the most ardent affection, you regarded me with looks of tenderness, and you washed me with your precious blood ! What return shall I make for so much love ? Ah, you want no other return than love, you wish but for a reciprocity of love. O you Seraphim ! cast down into my heart one spark of your fire, that it may inflame my soul, and make me burn with a most intense love for my Jesus, who loves me so much.

Of hatred of ourselves. O Eternal Father ! let thy hand weigh heavily upon me, I beseech Thee ; let it weigh heavily upon me, and turn upon me alone that anger which was showered in such abundance on thy only begotten Son. It is I who have sinned :

I am the guilty one, not Christ. Jesus is innocent. He is the immaculate lamb who has fallen a victim to this wolf. Why dost Thou punish Him, and not me? Why is the cross His portion, and not rather mine?

Ah! my Lord, if thy mercy is so indulgent with me, I ought to take the part of thy justice, and satisfy it, as far as in me lies, during the remainder of my life. Wherefore, I shall control my senses, I shall mortify my passions, I shall do violence to my corrupt will. Be pleased to accept my sacrifice; and now, from this moment forward, I promise Thee, with the assistance of thy grace, to wish to follow Jesus through afflictions, humiliations, and poverty; solely in order to bear a more close resemblance to Him, who, for love of me, deigned to be poor, humbled, and afflicted. I have already taken my resolution: the third degree of humility shall be that which I will make every endeavour to reach.

COMPENDIUM.

1. Consider the pains which Jesus suffered in His body. *Firstly*, He was flogged, and the excessive torture of this punishment may be inferred—(1.) from the delicacy of His body, (2.) from the rage of the executioners, (3.) from the quality of the scourges, (4.) from the number of the blows.

Secondly, He was *crowned with thorns*. This, too, was a terrible torture—(1) because of the sharpness and number of the thorns; (2.) because of the delicacy of the head; (3.) because of the cruelty of the executioners; (4.) because of the violent manner in which He was stripped of His garments, whereby all His wounds were made to bleed afresh.

Thirdly, He Himself carries His cross. This labour was for Jesus distressing beyond measure—(1.) because of the great weight of that beam; (2.) because of the length and ruggedness of the road; (3.) because of the steep ascent of Calvary; (4.) because of the physical weakness of Jesus.

II. *Firstly.* Consider the *manner* in which Jesus suffers—(1.) in *silence*; (2.) with *alacrity*, and a *desire* to suffer still more; (3.) with *love* for His Eternal Father, and for sinners.

Secondly. Consider the *fruit* which you ought to gather from all this. It is (1.) a feeling of noble shame for pampering your flesh, while the body of Jesus is torn with scourges, pierced with thorns, and rent with nails; (2.) a holy emulation to suffer with Christ, and to wish to imitate Him in the third degree of humility.

CONSIDERATION.

On the happiness and glory of a soul that is despised and afflicted.

Since, on the one hand, the end of the exercises of this day is to confirm the soul in the resolution which it adopted yesterday, of striving to attain the third degree of humility—that is, to prefer (even though the glory of God would be the same in any case) to be despised and afflicted with Jesus, rather than live amidst honours and pleasures, in order thus to resemble our Redeemer the more closely; and since, on the other hand, the love of contempt and affliction is entirely opposed to the inclinations of our corrupt nature, it will be most useful to set before us the *happiness* and the *glory* which lie

concealed beneath affliction and contempt. For what can render disgrace more lovable, than to show that to be despised brings with it not shame but glory, and that suffering renders one not wretched but happy.

I. *The glory* which adversity brings to a despised and afflicted soul, is glory of the very highest order. For it proves a man to be a hero, it makes him like the martyrs and the angels; it makes him very dear to Christ, and closely resembling Him. (1.) Adversity makes the man who bears it with fortitude and patience a hero; and the very Pagans knew this truth, among whom Epictetus gave utterance to these sublime words: "*It is by adversity that we are proclaimed to be men*" (a), which is the same as to say that, if we be not tried by the test of adversity, it cannot be known whether we really possess the spirit and the hearts of men. Seneca sets forth the same doctrine more at length. "*It is no sign,*" he says, "*of a great mind to show itself strong in prosperity, when life glides on smoothly; just as a calm sea and a favourable wind afford no opportunity for displaying the sailor's art. Something adverse must needs turn up, to prove a man possessed of a hero's soul*" (b). And S. John Chrysostom says: "God acts in the same manner with those He loves, as a captain does with his soldiers, when he sends the bravest on the most difficult enterprises. So that the more difficult the enterprise is, the greater is the glory of being chosen to undertake it." We have examples of this in Joseph in Egypt, and in the case of David in the cave of Engaddi.

(a) Epictetus apud Arianum, lib. I., cap. xxiv.

(b) Seneca, lib. de consol. cap. vi,

2. Adversity likens us to the martyrs and to the angels. The first of these assertions is maintained by S. Laurence Justinian, who says: "*Patience makes a man a martyr*"; and before him St. Climacus had written that the soul of one who is scoffed at is like the soul of a martyr.

The second assertion is borne out by St. Chrysostom, who says: "*those noble souls who tranquilly endure insults and contumely resemble the heavenly powers who rejoice in impassibility*" (a); and if we call the angels happy, because neither cold, nor hunger, nor thirst can effect them, how much more happy ought we to call that soul which can bravely bear up against every trial and affliction? and what can be more glorious than to be likened to the angels and martyrs?

3. Adversity proves that we are very dear to Christ; and makes us bear a very striking resemblance to Him; and St. Teresa shows us this from experience, for she says: "It has been always observed that those who were nearest and dearest to Christ our Lord, were crushed and oppressed above all others by severe trials and bitter tribulations" (b); and Jesus Himself said to the blessed Angela of Foligno: "My daughter, my friends drink with me the cup of my passion, and I feed them off my own plate with the bread of affliction."

But still more: not only are the afflicted the friends of Jesus, but they bear moreover a striking resemblance to Him: "*For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made comformable to the will of his Son*" (c).

(a) S. Chrysostom, hom. 47, ad populum.

(b) S. Teresa, in MS. lib. VII. c. iv. (c) Rom. viii. 29.

See how many strokes, scratches, filings, punctures, and incisions an artist must employ in order to produce from a piece of ivory a good representation of the crucifixion—a figure that will show the Redeemer in the very act of expiring, with His chest heaving, His lips parched, agony expressed in His countenance, and the veil of death falling over His eyes. In this behold an image of the manner in which tribulations and trials must work upon your soul, if you wish that it should bear a resemblance to Christ. Yet, nevertheless, you shrink back affrighted from adversity, and every pain causes you dismay.

II. The *happiness* of a despised and afflicted soul will also be very great, both on account of the prerogatives which accompany this state, and the greatness of the grace which lies concealed beneath the garb of adversity. And in respect of the *prerogatives*, I tell you that adversity is a stepping-stone to perfection; it is an indication of God's love for us; it is a sign of predestination. 1. That it is a *means of acquiring sanctity*, we are assured by S. Gregory the Great in these words: "*I assert confidently that you are leading a less perfect life if you suffer little persecution*" (a). And the reason of this is evident, for contempt, poverty, and suffering, withdraw their strength and enticements from pride, gluttony, and self-love.

2. Adversity is a *proof of God's love for us*, and it is God Himself who so many times bears witness to this truth in the Holy Scriptures: "*whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth*" (b); "*because thou wast*

(a) Lib. vi. ep. 37.

(b) Heb. xii. 6.

acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (a); and, there, S. Laurence Justinian, echoing the voice of God, writes: "*In the case of the just, tribulation is a proof of love*" (b). Nay more, he adds: "*The more dearly anyone is loved, the more severely is he punished in the present life*" (c). There is, moreover, this further consideration to be kept in view—that if God, by sending us afflictions, shows His love for us, we, on our part, by bearing those trials joyfully prove our love for Him! Wherefore, S. Catherine of Sienna says: "*The more we suffer, the greater proof do we give of our love*" (d).

3. Adversity is a *sign of predestination*, as S. Augustine affirms, saying: "*It is probable that God, when He chastises you with severe trials, has marked you out for the number of His elect*" (e). And S. Laurence Justinian asserts the same thing when he writes: "*In the just, tribulation is an indication of love, a presage of future happiness, and a proof of predestination*" (f). What is now your opinion? Will you not call the afflicted soul happy, if such splendid rewards follow in the wake of persecution?

Nor is the *abundance of grace* less which lies concealed beneath the mantle of adversity. For (1.) S. John Chrysostom says: "*Truly it is the very greatest grace to be deemed worthy to suffer something for Christ. It is a truly perfect crown, and a reward not inferior to that of future retribution*" (g). Nay,

(a) Tobias xii. 13. (b) De casto connubio, cap. vi.

(c) Idem. fasciculo amoris, cap. viii. (d) Dialog. cap. v.

(e) Epist. ad Allipi. (f) Lib. de casto connubio, cap. vi.

(g) Hom de S. Anna.

he adds that, even though our sufferings merited no reward, it would be in itself a sufficient reward to suffer for one we love (a).

2. It is a greater thing to suffer than to work miracles. S. John Chrysostom says : “ *For the power of working miracles I am a debtor to God ; but by my patience I make Christ my debtor* ” (b). Wherefore, the Blessed Baptist Verana used often exclaim : “ O Lord, if you were to reveal to me all the secrets of your most loving heart, you would not confer on me such a favour as by sending me afflictions.”

See how the saints felt concerning the *glory* and the *happiness* of suffering ; see what are the sentiments of the children of God ; and, therefore, try not to be the degenerate descendant of those valiant souls ; for which purpose, apply yourself earnestly and perseveringly to the practice of the third degree of humility.

EXAMEN.

On Patience and Obedience.

Since no one can attain the third degree of humility, and persevere therein, unless he be armed with the greatest patience ; and since, on the other hand, obedience continually furnishes us with occasions of suffering ; the order of things demands that we should set forth the object, the degree, and the motives of both these virtues.

(a) Hom. 8, in Ep. ad Ephes. (b) Idem in cap. 1, in Ep. ad Ephes.

1. *Patience* is a virtue which inclines the will to bear calmly every adversity. Its object is the loss of the goods of fortune by means of poverty; of honour and reputation, by means of contempt and calumny; of health and of life, by means of sickness and of death; and of peace of soul, by means of scruples, annoyances, and trouble of mind.

We should bear all those trials (1.) with *silent patience*, without complaining of our grievances to others, without being at all disturbed in mind, or pouring out our lamentations before God, but generously locking them up in our own hearts, and forgetting them.

2. We ought to bear them with a *grateful joy*; for the apostles not only rejoiced to suffer insults for the sake of Christ, but they even thanked God for them as for signal favours.

3. We ought to bear them *with a desire of suffering still more*. Jesus Christ Himself gave us an example of this upon the cross, where He thirsted for fiercer tortures; S. Paul challenged every kind of tribulation; and S. Francis Xavier, in the midst of his many labours and sufferings, used to exclaim: "*More, O Lord! more, O Lord*".

4. We ought to bear them with a firm *persuasion* that our trials are a mere nothing in comparison with those of Christ, of the martyrs, and of so many most afflicted saints; and, finally, that they are nothing in comparison with the pains of purgatory and hell, which we have so often merited by our sins.

Moreover, we should bear all evils in the manner just mentioned—(1.) through a motive of *self-humiliation*, and in *acknowledgment* of the full and absolute

dominion which God has over us. (2) With the intention of satisfying the *Divine justice*, which we have so often provoked. (3.) Through a motive of *penance*. (4.) Through a motive of love for Jesus Christ, and for His Eternal Father. Here examine yourself, and strive to discover whether your patience extends itself to all *those evils* which we have enumerated above, and whether you suffer in *that manner*, and for all *these motives*, which we have already set down.

II. *Obedience* is a virtue by which man, for the sake of God, obeys another man in things that are lawful. Its object is the *person whom*, and the *thing in which*, we obey. For, *first*, The truly obedient man obeys *all* his superiors, (2.) even those who are less virtuous, less prudent, and less learned than himself; nay, even though in issuing their orders they should display a hasty, passionate, and tyrannical disposition. (3.) Still more, we should obey even our inferiors, when they command in the name of the superior.

Secondly. He who is truly obedient obeys in *all* things that are enjoined; even when to obey involves a risk (1.) of losing health or life; or (2.) of forfeiting honour, reputation, or the acquisition of learning; or (3.) becomes particularly repugnant to our feelings, because we discover in him who issues the command manifest injustice, or partiality, or other sinister dispositions.

Thirdly. The truly obedient person obeys in that manner which is *most perfect*—(1.) With the *greatest alacrity*, so as even to stop short in the middle of a word, or to leave the formation of a letter unfinished. (2.) With an entire conformity of his

will to the will of the superior, not murmuring with himself, or pouring his complaints into the ears of others. (3.) With a blind submission of the *intellect*, believing that to be best which the superior commands; and if that which the superior orders should be something imprudent, difficult, and troublesome, he thanks the Lord for having afforded him an opportunity of sacrificing at once his *intellect* and his *will*.

Finally, we must obey—(1.) Through a motive of *faith*, showing thereby that we believe Christ, who said: “*He who hears you hears me*”. (2.) Through a motive of *hope*, trusting that, by means of obedience, we shall be governed and saved by Divine Providence. (3.) Through a motive of *charity*, making, by means of obedience, a free gift to God of that which we hold most dear and precious, namely, our will and our intellect. Examine yourself, and discover what degree you have attained in this virtue. Do you obey promptly, with joy, and with entire submission of your own judgment?

This method of practising patience and obedience greatly lessens the difficulty which is found in the third degree of humility; and as we are accustomed to feel an aversion for those who cause us *to suffer* in our character, in our person, or in our property, or to obey in things that are difficult and repugnant to self-love, we shall find a remedy for this evil in the following meditation, in which Jesus dying on the cross will teach us to love, and serve, our enemies.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the death of Christ upon the Cross.

FIRST POINT.

Consider how Jesus is now about to complete His great sacrifice. When inviting you to follow Him, He told you that He would Himself always lead the way in *labours*, in *vigils*, and in *every other difficulty*; and now He abundantly fulfils His promise. It is here precisely, nailed to the cross, that He causes the third degree of humility to shine forth resplendent above everything else, and exhibits a bright example of it in His own sacred person. Here, instead of riches, He chose poverty; instead of honours, contempt; instead of pleasure, pain; and instead of health and life, He chooses sufferings and death.

And all this he does in no ordinary way; but His poverty is so great, that no greater can be imagined, while He hangs there in air, entirely naked, without a place whereon to lay His head, without a rag to cover Him. The contempt in which He is held cannot possibly be surpassed, while insults, shouts of derision, and calumnies are continually ringing in His ears. The tortures and agony which He endures are so cruel, so universal, and so intense, that the Prophet can find nothing to be compared with them except the sea: "*Great as the sea is thy destruction*" (a).

Finally, the character of His death is such, that it

(a) Jer. Lamentations, ii. 13.

is incapable of additional suffering or disgrace, whether we consider the *time* of His death—namely, in the flower of His years, during the solemnity of the Passover, in the full light of day; or the *tortures* which ended His life; or the *manner* in which He was put to death—amidst the sneers of the Pharisees: “*Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God*” (a); amidst the blasphemies of the Scribes: “*They that passed by blasphemed Him*” (b); amidst the imprecations of the two robbers: “*The thieves also, that were crucified with Him, reproached Him*” (c); amidst the raillery of the Seniors: “*Save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross*” (d); without receiving any comfort from His friends: “*all his acquaintances . . . stood afar off*” (e); without any heavenly consolation: “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*” (f). And thus dies the only-begotten Son of God, the salvation of the world, abandoned by all, torn with scourges, pierced with thorns, nailed to an infamous gibbet; naked, and in the midst of blasphemies and derision. Look, O my soul, “*look upon the face of thy Christ*” (g), who, by His example, incites and animates you to the love of poverty, of suffering, and contempt; that is to that third degree of humility, towards which you so solemnly promised to direct your steps resolutely and perseveringly during your entire life. Behold Jesus upon the cross, and then say if you can have the heart to turn your back upon Him, and to break faith with Him. Treasure up in

(a) Mark xv. 29.

(c) Luke xxii. 49.

(e) Matt. v. 40.

(g) Ps. lxxxiii. 10.

(b) Mark xv. 44.

(d) Matt. xxvii. 39.

(f) Matt. xxvii. 46.

your memory what was said in the consideration on the three degrees—namely, that he who does not earnestly endeavour to reach the third degree, runs a serious risk of not remaining constant in the second ; and, what is still more terrible, of falling away even from the first. Strive to penetrate this truth thoroughly, and to gather from it fruit proportionate to its importance. Reflect, moreover, what would become of you, if, being found wanting in the hour of trial, Christ should reproach you in the hour of judgment with that cross, those nails, that gall, that nakedness, those thorns—all of which He endured for your sins.

SECOND POINT.

We see, moreover, in Jesus hanging on the cross, an example of *remarkable obedience*, since He is "*obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross*" (a). For, (1.) He is obedient to *all*; not to His Eternal Father alone, but also to Caiphas, to Pilate, to the soldiers, to the executioners, who had no power over Him. (2.) He obeys *in all things*, even the most difficult: at a beck He puts off His clothes; He stretches out His hands and feet, to receive the manacles and fetters; He presents His head for the crown of thorns; places His shoulders beneath the cross; extends Himself on that rough beam, and opens wide His hands to be nailed to it. (3.) And this He does in a *most perfect manner*, without contradiction or resistance; but permitting

(a) Philip. iii. 8.

Himself to be ill-used; *blindly*, as far as His intellect was concerned; *readily*, as far as regarded His *will*; and to *the full extent*, in respect of the execution of the designs of His enemies.

The Redeemer's sufferings become considerably aggravated by three circumstances in particular. (1.) He who had been regarded by all as a prophet, a saint, and even as the Messiah, now saw Himself publicly condemned to an infamous death. (2.) And He was thus condemned, after having sustained so many labours during His apostolic life, after having worked so many miracles, after having showered so many favours on men. (3.) And His condemnation was the triumph of His enemies, who insulted Him, and prided themselves on having crushed Him, though they only succeeded in doing so through the manifest injustice of the judges.

These are the self-same circumstances which render the crosses of priests and religious so difficult to bear—namely, to be put to confusion before seculars, after having laboured for so many years in the sacred ministry or in religion; while their rivals and enemies take a malicious pleasure in insulting them; and while they sometimes have to suffer mortification at the hands of their very superiors, who act either on unreliable information, or through prejudice.

But we must not on this account turn our backs upon the cross, or fly from the third degree of humility. And that you may be encouraged to persevere, know (1.) that *suffering is necessary*; for, "*through many tribulations, we must enter into the kingdom of God*" (a). Impatience in nowise takes away or

(a) Acts xiv. 21.

lessens the trial which presses on us; on the contrary, it increases our suffering while it robs us of all merit. (2.) Suffering affords us an opportunity of *satisfying* for our sins. (3.) It makes us *like* Christ, who for our sake suffered so much. O most obedient Jesus! grant that, animated by Thy example, I, too, may be obedient *always, to all, and in all things*.

THIRD POINT.

There shines forth in Christ crucified a most ardent *love of His enemies*, which is a virtue by so much the more precious as it is difficult. Here consider briefly *what kind* of enemies He loves, and *how* He loves them. To pardon and to love enemies (1.) whom we have not only not offended, but on whom we have heaped innumerable favours; (2.) who not only refuse to ask our forgiveness, but hate us, and actually insult us; (3.) and to pardon them when we have it in our power to be fully revenged; (4.) nay, even not only to pray for them, but to die for them, and this, too, by a painful and infamous death, is assuredly a miracle of charity, and the very perfection of the most sublime virtue.

And Jesus *pardoned* and *loved* in this manner those enemies who emulated one another in increasing the malignity of their hate and ferocity. Jesus not only never offended them, but He even "*went about doing good*" (a). Nevertheless, they hated and insulted Him, crying out, "*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*" (b). By a single act of His will, Christ could have annihi-

(a) Acts x. 38.

(b) Luke xxiii. 21.

lated them, and yet not only does He pardon them, but He asks His Father to pardon them. He excuses them, and becomes their apologist: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (a). O truly Divine method of forgiving injuries! Wherefore, having pondered well on these two points—namely, *what kind* of enemies Jesus pardoned, and *how* He pardoned them, let us, also, arrive at the following conclusion: "Therefore, we, too, must love our enemies, and those who hate and persecute us; nay more, we must serve them, as far as it lies in our power." Christ Himself teaches us this: "*I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also*" (b). God commands it: "*Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you*" (c). Nay, the Lord declares, that whosoever hates his brother does not love God: "*If any man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*" (d). Let us examine ourselves, then; and let each one of us ask himself, In what manner do I pardon my enemies? How do I love them? What favours do I confer upon them?

AFFECTIONS.

An act of love of our enemies. Yes, O Lord, here at the foot of Thy cross, and in presence of Thee crucified, expiring through love of Thy enemies, I bind myself, and swear, to pardon all those who have offended me; and, still more, to love them, and do them all the good in my power. I hate and detest

(a) Luke xxiii. 34.

(c) Luke vi. 27.

(b) John xiii. 15.

(d) 1 John iv. 20.

all—even the very least feelings of dislike, hatred, and spite. And if I thought that in my veins there flowed a single drop of blood which did not entirely pardon my enemies, I would open that vein, and cast it from me. Do Thou, O Jesus, grant me the grace to imitate Thee, and then the more men offend me the more shall I love them.

An act of obedience. O my Jesus! since you have been obedient unto death—even unto the death of the cross—I, also, promise you, with the assistance of your grace, to obey *all* my superiors, . . . in *all* things, how difficult soever they may be, . . . *always*, perfectly, promptly, and blindly.

A desire of resembling Christ by means of the third degree of humility. O my soul, look upon the face of thy Jesus nailed to the cross! See how He has ascended to the third degree of humility! Behold! He, to whom were due all the honours, the pleasures, and the riches of the world, has for His portion, instead, all its insults, its miseries, and its pains—and this solely because He wished that it should be so! Behold! He who could have redeemed us by shedding a single tear, wishes that His veins should be torn open, and that from His broken heart all His most precious blood should gush forth in torrents.

Ah! my Jesus, why so much suffering? Why so much poverty? Why so much disgrace? Ah! you wished to set before me a solemn example of what I ought to do in order to become like you. But since you have already done so much, solely in order to serve me as an example, do now that which is less. Give me the grace to imitate Thee in the third degree of humility; that I may abandon, solely in order to resemble Thee the more closely, honours, riches, and

pleasures, and take for my portion suffering, poverty, and contempt.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Jesus Christ dying on the cross is for us a most perfect model of the third degree of humility: for here it is, principally, that He chooses poverty in lieu of riches, insults instead of honours, hardships instead of pleasures, and sufferings and death instead of health and life.

And all this He endures, not in the ordinary way, but in the most painful, most trying, and most ignominious manner; whether we take into consideration the *time* of His death; or the *torments* which caused it; or the *circumstances* which accompanied it.

II. Jesus dying on the cross is an illustrious *example of obedience*. For (1.) He obeys *all*. (2.) He is obedient in *all things*—even in those which are most difficult. (3.) He obeys in a *most perfect manner*, that is entirely, . . promptly, . . blindly; and while the various circumstances accompanying his passion increase more and more the difficulty of that obedience.

III. Jesus dying on the cross is the most perfect model of *love of our enemies*, since He loves enemies (1.) whom He had never offended, but had always served. (2.) Who, far from asking pardon for their offences against Him, only insulted Him the more. (3.) Upon whom He might have taken signal vengeance, had it so pleased Him. And yet, His love goes to the length not only of pardoning them, but of praying for them, and even of dying for their salvation.

Eighth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Resurrection of Christ.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER the *happiness* of Jesus in His Resurrection. During the time of His Passion, He had entirely lost those four principal kinds of goods which belong to man. He lost even His very garments, when He was reduced to a state of complete nudity; He made a sacrifice of His honour, by subjecting Himself to the most outrageous insults; He forfeited His health and His incomparable beauty, by submitting to the horrible tortures inflicted upon Him by the executioners; and finally He made the sacrifice of His most precious life by a most cruel death.

But now, on arising from the dead, and coming forth again from the sepulchre, He receives back, at one hundred-fold interest, all that He had previously lost. For (1.) He who before was poor is now become rich, and "*the Lord of the whole earth*" (a). (2.) He who a few days before was reputed a worm, and the reproach of men, now "*crowned with glory and honour*" (b), "*sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high*" (c). He who before was "a

(a) Micheas iv. 13. (b) Ps. viii. 6. (c) Heb. i. 3.

man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity” (a). now invigorated with new strength, “*hath broken gates of brass, and burst iron bars*” (b). He “*whom they killed, hanging Him upon a tree*” (c), now “is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep” (d), and His most holy body “*shall shine as the brightness of the firmament for all eternity*” (e).

Wherefore break forth into acts of love and congratulation; and rejoice that you selected Him for your King and Captain, and enrolled yourself to fight beneath His glorious standard, promising to march with Him to the third degree of humility. Renew again the oath you have already sworn; promise Him unwavering constancy; and call heaven and earth to be witnesses of your loyal devotion.

SECOND POINT.

Consider the *certainty* of hope in a glorious future which the resurrection of Christ brings us; for the happiness which He now enjoys in His resurrection is the standard and pledge of our future happiness. The apostle has promised us this; and, as an earnest of his promise, he gives utterance to that solemn oath: “*a faithful saying,*” which means, “I speak the truth,” *If we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him*” (f); yet so, *if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him*” (g). Such is the compact. Who will doubt it? Who will hold the

(a) Isa. liii. 3.

(b) Ps. cvi. 16.

(c) Acts x. 39.

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 20.

(e) Daniel xii. 3.

(f) 2 Tim. ii. 12.

(g) Rom. viii. 17.

apostle guilty of falsehood, when he assures us that his doctrine is "*a faithful saying*"?

Moreover, the measure of our happiness will be proportionate to the perfection of the manner in which we imitate Christ. On this point, also, we have the authority of St. Paul, where he says: "*Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation*" (a): that is, Jesus, our Captain, will rigorously fulfil that which, if you remember, He promised in the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, saying, "that every one would share in the victory and its rewards, in proportion to the part he took in the labours and trials of the campaign". So it is: the more closely we approach Him by the third degree of humility, the higher will be our throne of glory hereafter.

Wherefore, take courage. Rejoice in your sufferings, and embrace the cross with feelings of pleasure; for the more you humble yourself upon earth, the more exalted shall you be in heaven. The poorer you are here below, the more abundant shall be your riches in God's Kingdom. The more bitter your sufferings here, the more intense and unutterable shall be your joy hereafter.

THIRD POINT.

Consider the *greatness* of the glory which we hope for in heaven. In the first place, the joys of heaven are great, because they are *infinite*; as well because of the infinite evils which they exclude, as because of the infinite blessings which are comprehended in them. This very body of yours, whose rebellious

appetites you are now striving to subdue, and to keep in control by means of mortification, this body shall surpass the sun in *brightness*, the winds in *agility*, and in *subtilty* and *impassability* it shall be equal to the angels.

And the soul, Oh, with how many greater delights will your soul abound! Oh, with what joys will it be inebriated when it shall call to mind the graces to which it corresponded; the temptations which it resisted; the occasions of sin which it avoided; the virtues which it practised; the penance which it endured! O God, your happy soul will exclaim, O God, it was possible for me, indeed, to have damned myself! Ah, if I had yielded to that temptation [N]; if I had resisted that impulse of grace [N], where would I now be? With the assistance of thy grace, I resisted, I fought, I conquered. O holy afflictions! O blessed insults! O happy trials! O third degree of humility, fountain of every good!

In the next place, the *intellect* shall behold God not as "*now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face*" (a), plunging itself entire into that ocean of light which completely irradiates it. The *will* shall possess God with a most intense love, and in God it shall possess all things. It shall wish for no pleasure which it shall not instantly enjoy; it shall form no desire which shall not be immediately gratified; nay, not only shall it have everything that it desires, but it shall be satiated with such a fulness of happiness, that there shall no longer remain anything further to desire. Behold the blessed end to which the third degree of humility conducts us!

(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Secondly, the goods of heaven are great, because they are *eternal*. O word of most profound meaning! O eternity of contentment, what art thou! The delights of heaven are infinite, and still more, they are eternal: the soul shall be engulfed in a bottomless sea of pleasures, and shall be engulfed therein for ever. And those holy and ineffable joys, and that sun of most brilliant light, shall melt our soul with incomprehensible sweetness for ever—for ever. O sweet thought! I am happy, and I shall be happy for eternity. O truly "*eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him*" (a).

If this be so, then, we ought to do and suffer everything, in order to arrive at the possession of this *infinite* and *eternal* happiness; we ought to serve God, by imitating Christ in the third degree of humility; and we should persevere in this to the very last moment of our lives; for "*the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*" (b). And if we believe all this, is it not an excess of folly to throw away eternal glory, an eternity of delights, for the empty smoke of wordly honours, for some trifling indulgence, for the fleeting pleasure of a moment? And are we not our own worst enemies, if we object to that low office, that humble dwelling; if we do not struggle against the impulse of our passions; if we do not trample our pride under foot, when such worthless things would rob us of so great a treasure? Oh, how the sad remembrance of not having wished

(a) 1 Cor. ii. 9.

(b) Romans viii. 18.

to attain to the third degree of humility, shall afterwards eat away your heart ! But it will then be too late. Our sorrow shall be fruitless.

AFFECTIONS.

Of sorrow. O my Creator and my Lord, what have I done ? what have I done ? When I resisted that grace, omitted that act of virtue, avoided that contempt, withdrew myself from that occasion of suffering, what was it that I did ? Ah, I know it well now ; I foolishly rejected so much greater eternal glory. I lost for ever, O eternal fountain of love, the opportunity of beholding Thee with more luminous clearness, and of loving Thee with a more intense and a more lively affection ; and this I did for such a small thing as vainglory, a momentary pleasure.

Of resolution for the future. But my soul now returns to wiser counsels, and I therefore propose, with the assistance of Thy holy grace, to adhere firmly to the resolution which I adopted in the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, namely, to follow Thee as closely as possible, by bearing insults, poverty, and sufferings in the third degree of humility ; that I may thus come one day to enjoy Thee for eternity in heaven.

Of hope. Yes ! O Lord, my heart is consoled by the firm hope of passing from the bitter trials of this life to the sweet enjoyments of the saints ; from afflictions to contentment ; from conflicts to victory ; from the cross to a throne of glory. Oh when, then, shall I behold Thee, my King and my Captain ? When shall I receive from thy hands that splendid crown, which Thou hast promised to thy valiant

soldiers? When shall I see Thy standard, under which I enrolled myself, glittering in the light of heaven, and shedding its brilliant rays over the thrones of the blessed? When, O Lord? "*When shall the day arrive that Thou shalt be all in all to me?*" (a).

COMPENDIUM.

I. Consider the happiness of Jesus in His Resurrection. On the cross He had forfeited His prosperity, honour, health, and life; but now, on coming forth from the sepulchre, (1.) from having been poor and naked, He has become rich, and "*the Lord of the whole earth*". (2.) The insults and mockery have become for Him a crown of honour and of glory. (3.) From having been feeble and weak, He has arisen robust and vigorous. (4.) He who had been dead now arises to a new and more glorious existence. Love, praise, and honour your King, and congratulate Him on His triumph.

II. Consider the *certainty* of hope which the Resurrection of Christ brings us; for St. Paul assures us that, "*if we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him*" (2 Tim. ii. 11); if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified with Him. Nay, He promises that the measure of our happiness shall be proportionate to the perfection of the manner in which we shall imitate Him, saying, "*As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation*" (2 Cor. i. 7). Be encouraged, then, to suffer: look up to the reward which awaits you, to the crown which is prepared for you!

(a) "Imitation of Christ," Book III., ch. 48.

III. Consider the *greatness* of the glory which you hope for in heaven. The joys of heaven are (1) *Infinite*, (2) *Eternal*. There your *body* shall be clothed in light, and shall enjoy the prerogatives of agility, subtilty, and impassibility. Your *soul* shall enjoy the plenitude of happiness in its *memory*, in calling to mind the graces to which you corresponded and the temptations which you resisted. The *intellect* shall see God *face to face*. The *will* shall possess God, and in God every treasure; and all these joys shall be eternal. O what a glorious thought this is! They shall be eternal.

LECTURE.

For the Last Day of the Exercises.

As the first week of the exercises regarded the purgative way, and the second and third the illuminative way, so the fourth week (to which this last day is referred) regards the unitive way; because during this period, by conceiving an ardent desire of heaven, by the love of Christ, and by conforming our will to the will of God, we unite ourselves to that *last end* of ours which Saint Ignatius proposed for our consideration on the first day of the exercises; so that that should be last in execution which was first in intention; and that by seeing the happiness of the goal *towards which* we tend, we may be the more easily induced to shun the goal *from which* we started, which is *sin*.

In order to attain this object the more securely, S. Ignatius conducted us, by means of the consideration of the heinousness of offending God, and the

recollection of the four last things, to the *detestation*, principally, of *mortal sin*, and (by means of a knowledge of ourselves) to the *extirpation of its roots*, guiding us in this manner along the path of salvation and virtue. That we may tread this path with greater safety, in the meditation on the kingdom of Christ, He proposes *Jesus as our conductor*, that we might imitate Him, principally in the practice of poverty, and in bearing contempt and afflictions; thus restraining that vicious appetite for riches, honours, and pleasures, which exercises such a powerful influence over our corrupt nature.

Moreover, in the meditation on the two standards, and on the three classes of men, he encouraged us to ascend to the *third degree of humility*, persuading us to imitate Christ, poor, humble, and afflicted; in troubles, humiliations, and poverty; even though we might live amidst riches, prosperity, and honours, with equal glory to God, and equal profit to our own souls; and this solely in order to bear a stronger likeness to Jesus Christ. To confirm us in our noble resolution, he yesterday proposed for the subject of our meditation Jesus Christ suffering, and to-day he calls our attention to Christ arisen from the dead; so that, incited by His *example*, and lured on by the hope of sharing His *glory*, we may be more constant and persevering in the third degree of humility.

How closely the exercises of this week are connected with the unitive way, we may infer from the tendency which they have to unite us to God, by inflaming us with His love, by stirring up within us a longing for our heavenly country, and a desire of conforming our will to the will of God. By means

of fervent meditation, continual recollection of spirit, and a tender and affectionate contemplation of the glorious humanity of Christ.

II. The *fruit* which we ought endeavour to gather to-day is: (1.) To confirm ourselves more and more in the third degree of humility, seeing with what riches, happiness, and glory, the poverty, sufferings, and humiliations of Christ were rewarded at His Resurrection by His Eternal Father. Add that, unless we attain this degree, we cannot accomplish the end to which the exercises are directed, which is to unite ourselves to God, our only end, by the sweet bond of love. For since it is necessary, in order to reach this great goal, to have banished from our hearts the vicious inclination towards riches, pleasures and honours, we can easily perceive that, unless we aspire to the third degree of humility, we can never reduce this tyrannical appetite to subjection. (2.) The second *fruit* is a more perfect practice of those virtues which most powerfully excite, and most effectually promote in our hearts the love of God (which is the sole end of the exercises); and those virtues consist principally in a fervent meditation, made regularly every day; in a continual recollection of spirit; and in the absolute conformity of our wishes and desires with the will of God. (3.) The most essential *fruit*, however, is a more clear knowledge, and a more intense love, of Jesus Christ, which is the special and most particular occupation of a soul that has reached the sublime height of the unitive way. To the attainment of this love, and the love of the Eternal Father, we shall be helped on in a special manner by the two following meditations, which are the two last links

in that admirable chain, by means of which S. Ignatius, in the school of the exercises, has connected all the *means* with the *end*.

III. In order to gather the more perfectly to-day the three fruits which we have just mentioned, we must observe the following *additions* of S. Ignatius—(1.) We must occupy ourselves during the entire day *exclusively* in joyous thoughts, regarding the glorious mystery which has already formed the subject of our meditation, and which we shall meditate still further later on. (2.) We should now open the windows, to enjoy the full light of heaven; and if the season permits it, we should go out to gladden our sight with the beauties of nature—the flowers, the verdure, the waters of the fountains dancing in the sun, the fresh rich fields; and in all we should admire, praise, and glorify our Creator and Redeemer. (3.) We should, also, mitigate somewhat our corporal austerities; but we should be very careful in observing the order or distribution of time, silence, and the other additions, as also not to read or write anything which has not reference to the exercises.

Above all, we must be on our guard against that evil suggestion of the devil, whereby he tempts us to give up our mind to-day to all kinds of rambling thoughts; for, if we do not, on the contrary, keep ourselves thoroughly recollected, we run a risk of losing in a moment the entire fruit of the exercises. A holy joy is quite a different thing from dissipation; the former nourishes and supports fervour and love, while the second extinguishes even the most burning charity, and chills even generous resolutions.

IV. For the rest, the *affections* in which we should indulge principally to-day are : (1.) Those of *joy*, by which we congratulate Jesus Christ on the splendid victory which He has won over His enemies; on the glory with which He was crowned, and on the plenitude of power with which He has been invested by the Eternal Father ; (2.) Of *hope* and *desire* to obtain happiness like to that of Christ ; not however a hope and desire which are but the haughty presumption of the soul ; but a practical hope and a practical desire, namely, which is based upon works, and not on the deceitful consciousness of our struggles and past victories. (3.) Of *love* towards Jesus Christ. This love should be constant, burning, and unflinching, even in the most difficult trials ; it should be loyal amidst the most seductive allurements, it should be operative and indefatigable, it should generously despise even the most trying dangers, and lead us on to walk in the most difficult paths ; for Saint Gregory says that love consists not in words but in deeds : “ *The proof of love is shown in works, and where love exists it works great things*”. In securing these splendid prerogatives for ourselves, we shall be greatly assisted by the last meditation, which treats of *spiritual love*, and we shall now set forth in the second paragraph how this is connected with all the others.

§ II.

Man has been created in order to know and to love God, as we have already seen in the first meditation on the Foundation. In the fruitive *love* of God in heaven consists man's supreme happiness ;

in the practical *love* of God in this world is found man's highest perfection. (2.) Now this love consists in the conformity of our will with the will of God, in virtue of which, our wishes and dislikes are identical with those of our Creator; for where this identity of wishes and desires does not exist, there cannot be love. (3.) This conformity supposes our *election* made by Divine impulse, in virtue of which we elect to serve our Creator in that state, or (in the state already chosen) in that degree of perfection in which He wishes to be served by us. (4.) In order to make this election well, we must be possessed of that indifference mentioned by S. Ignatius, concerning riches or poverty, honours or contempt, health or sickness, life or death; for if anyone should be unwilling to choose whatever was pleasing to God, his will would no longer be in conformity with the will of God, and therefore he would cease to love Him.

That which is mainly, nay, essentially, opposed to the love of God is sin. We spent the first week in endeavouring to root it out of our souls; but its sad consequence remained, which is a strong inclination towards riches, pleasures, and honours; wherefore, in order to reduce our soul to a state of equilibrium, we were obliged, by proposing to ourselves the example of Christ, to turn our desires in an opposite direction, and by means of the third degree of humility, to form our soul to an esteem, a love, and a desire of those things which our corrupt nature despises, hates, and abhors most—namely, humiliations, poverty and sufferings. This we have endeavoured to accomplish in the succeeding weeks.

Relieved, then, of so many troubles, freed from so

many chains, having overcome so many obstacles, we are at length masters of our affections ; and our soul, in the enjoyment of perfect liberty, eagerly seeks God, the only object of her happiness. And since she has won her victory, and has arrived at the possession of freedom, by means of the example of the life of Christ, it is but just that she should make Him the object of her love, and that her most ardent and lively affections should be centred in His sacred humanity. The following meditation will powerfully incite us to this ; and the last will supply the soul with an effectual stimulus to acquire a most pure, lively, and strong love of God, who is her Creator, her first beginning, and her last end.

But, whereas, on the one hand, prayer is that which principally fans, keeps alive, and increases the flame of Divine love ; and on the other hand, all are not skilled in the art of mental prayer, S. Ignatius, whose only object was to procure the perfection and salvation of his neighbour, has pointed out some methods of prayer which are accommodated to the capacity of everybody.

The first consists in going over, and reflecting on, not so much speculatively as practically—(1.) the commandments of the Decalogue and of the Church ; (2.) the capital sins ; (3.) the operations of the three faculties of the soul—the memory, the intellect and the will ; and (4.) of the five senses of the body ; examining meanwhile how much we have sinned against the former, or by means of the latter ; dwelling upon each point for about the space of time that would be occupied in reciting the “*Our Father*” three times. Regarding the *precepts*, we may, moreover reflect—(1.) how just they are ; (2.) how

salutary ; (3.) how holy. As regards *the sins*, we should not make an examination of conscience, but merely reflect how abominable and hurtful they are ; and on the contrary, how lovely and advantageous to the soul are the opposite virtues. Respecting the *faculties* of the soul, and the *senses* of the body, consider how noble and useful they are, and for what end they have been given to us by our Creator. Finish the exercise by thanking God for His gifts ; by begging of Him to pardon your sins ; by proposing a sincere amendment of life ; and by asking God's grace to carry your resolution into effect.

The *second* method of prayer consists in occupying ourselves for sometime in meditation on the meaning of the words and sense of some prayer, as, for example, "*The Lord's Prayer*," the "*Hail Mary*," or one of the *Psalms* ; and to dwell upon it so long as we can derive therefrom holy thoughts or feelings of tender affection. Wherefore if the mind and heart find matter to engage them, even in one or two words, we should tranquilly confine our meditation to them, even though we should pass an entire hour in this manner ; and afterwards we can read over the remaining portion of the meditation cursorily.

The *third* method of prayer is identical with the second, but shorter and more rapid. We dwell upon the signification of the words, and on the sense, with a lively attention, it is true ; but not for any length of time, as in the preceding method ; delaying upon each word merely for the space it would take to draw one's breath.

From what has been said we perceive that the distinctive feature of the *first* method is examination ; of the *second*, meditation ; while the *third* is the

most simple of all, and contains less of examination and meditation than the other two. It is, nevertheless, most useful in enabling us to say our vocal prayers with attention and devotion; and for this reason we should frequently practise it, more especially such of us as are bound to the recitation of the canonical hours.

Now that we have seen the *foundation* on which the Exercises are based, the *end* which they propose to themselves, the *means* by which they conduct us to to this end, the *connection* of these with one another, and of all with the end; it only remains to see briefly what are the *means* by which we may remain in secure and constant possession of that precious fruit, for the acquisition of which we have made so many meditations, and formed so many resolutions. The general means, then, are: (1.) Fervent prayer every day. (2.) To make a daily examination of conscience, and especially the particular examen. (3.) The frequentation of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. (4.) The choice of a fixed confessor, to whom we should manifest all the feelings of our heart without reserve. (5.) The holy practice of spiritual reading, conversation with devout persons, the avoidance of dangerous company, and a scrupulous care in shunning the occasions of sin. (6.) Recollection of spirit, and an occasional withdrawal from the ordinary distractions of the world, in order to apply with greater leisure to the affairs of our soul.

It will be very conducive also to our perseverance in virtue, if we *esteem* very highly this commencement, and as it were foundation of a good life which we have now laid in these Exercises. (2.) To con-

ceive a holy fear that, if we do not live hereafter in the manner in which we now know that we ought to live, we shall be the more severely punished by God. (3.) To be persuaded that up to the present we have done nothing more than to receive into our soul the first seed which God has been pleased to plant there; and that, henceforward, it will be our duty to nourish it, to care for it, to cultivate it, and to bring it to maturity. But the most excellent of all means to ensure perseverance is the love of Christ, to which we ought to be incited by the three motives, which we shall set forth in the following meditation. These are—(1) the glories of His humanity, (2) His excellence because of His divinity, and (3) His love for us.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Love of Christ.

FIRST POINT.

Consider *the excellence of his humanity*. (1.) The body of Christ is the temple of God, “*for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head corporally*” (a). It is the most perfect work of the Holy Ghost, for “*the power of the Most High overshadowed Mary*” (b), miraculously forming it from her most noble and most pure blood. It is the “*sanctuary of holiness*”; as well because of the impeccability of the Redeemer’s soul, as because of its enjoyment of the beatific vision, and the intensity of the love of frui-

(a) Colossians ii. 9.

(b) Luke i. 35.

tion which raises it to the rank of Holy of holies. Finally, it is the worthy dwelling-place of the Word of God; and in beautifying, adorning, and perfecting it, the Eternal Father lavished with liberal hand all the treasures of His omnipotence, the Son those of His wisdom, and the Holy Ghost those of His love.

Moreover, the beauty of the body of Christ is ravishing because of the perfect symmetry of its parts, because of the amiability expressed in the countenance, the tender sweetness that beams forth from the eyes, the serene majesty which is stamped upon the forehead, the sweet melody of the voice, and that holy ray of love which lights up all, and proclaims the Redeemer to be all mildness, all gentleness.

II. But if the body of Christ our Lord is so beautiful and so lovable, what must be the beauty of His soul? It is so great, that to place it in comparison with the beauty of all the angels and all the saints, would be as absurd as to compare the dazzling brilliancy of the sun to the flickering light of a taper. His *memory* is the living mirror which ever reflects, retains, and contemplates the Divine perfections. In His intellect "*are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (a); for from the first instant of its creation it contemplated the Divine essence and all its infinite perfections "*face to face*"; that is, with an intuitive and most sublime knowledge. His *will* is the continual exercise of the most sublime virtues, and a torch ever burning with the most intense love of God. This blessed soul is adorned with all the other gifts of the Holy Ghost, and with a habitual grace, so excellent and sublime

(a) Colossians ii. 3.

that it surpasses the comprehension of men and angels. Who is it, then, that will not feel himself melting with the fire of the love of the most sacred humanity of Christ, in which were united a body so beautiful, and a soul enriched with every precious gift?

SECOND POINT.

Consider the *excellence of Christ by reason of His Divinity*. Nothing elevates and ennobles the most sacred humanity of Jesus, so much as the Divine nature which is united to it. This is that sublime excellence of the dignity of Christ, which the blessed spirits in heaven, lost in bewilderment, are ever contemplating. For what can be more stupendous than that the human nature should subsist by means of the Divine person; should be substantially united to the Word; and form one whole with the Divine nature, in such manner that, by the "communication of idioms" (as theologians say), whatever can be predicated of God may be also predicated of Jesus Christ; and again, that the qualities which are proper and natural to man, may be also predicated of God? Thus, we may say that God is weak, in sorrow, in agony; and we may also say, that man is immense, omnipotent, infinite. And who will not be lost in amazement, when he reflects that the humanity of Christ is penetrated by the Divinity more thoroughly than the red-hot iron is penetrated by the fire, the air by light, and the crystal by the rays of the sun?

Moreover, Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, sitting at His right hand; He is all things, and by Him and in Him all things exist, and without Him

all things are nothing. He it was that established peace between God and man; He is our advocate at the tribunal of Divine justice; He “blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross” (a). How ardent then ought to be our love for Jesus, the prodigy of Divine omnipotence, the compendium of every excellence, the beginning and the end of our salvation?—and yet, who would believe it! Neither this ravishing beauty, nor such surpassing excellence, nor the great love which He has exhibited in our regard, can induce us to love Him! Ah, Jesus! Thou art all inflamed with love of us, and we are so ungrateful as not to love Thee in return!

The love of Christ towards us. Now examine *what* it is that loves, *whom* He loves, and *in what manner* He loves him. (1.) O man! *He who loves thee* is the Son of God, the King of glory, the Lord of heaven and earth. (2.) The being *whom He loves* is nothingness and sin, rottenness and ashes, an ungrateful and rebellious monster, a slave of hell and of his own vile passions, who by his repeated sins is ever crucifying anew the Son of God. (3.) *The manner*, finally, in which He loves you, knows no measure; it is immense, infinite. Through love of you He made an entire sacrifice of Himself, and of all that He possessed—the comforts of home and of riches, the pleasures of soul and body, His reputation and His honour, His health and even His life. Through love of you He endured the most gross contempt, the direst poverty, the most excruciating

(a) Colossians ii. 14.

torments, and, finally, a most cruel death. He offered up for you that life which He did not offer up for the sins of the angels, thus preferring your nature to that of the heavenly spirits.

Moreover, Jesus loves you with a continual love: "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love*" (a). With a constant love: "*Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end*" (b). With a love that showed forth His excessive benevolence towards you, for "*when as yet we were sinners, . . . Christ died for us*" (c). With a gratuitous love, for He foresaw that we would repay all His love with the most enormous offences. Still more, He issued a command that everyone, were he even your most bitter enemy, should love you, saying: "*Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you*" (d); and He threatens eternal punishment in hell to such as do not love you. Moreover, He has entirely given you Himself in the Blessed Eucharist; He has made Himself your food, your drink, your medicine. And shall we not love Jesus in return for such boundless love? and shall our heart love the most vile creatures, and not burn with love for Jesus? Shall it be cold as ice, and harder than bronze or the diamond, only in the case of Jesus? Ah! we will exclaim with the apostle, "*If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema*" (e).

(a) Jeremias xxxi. 3.

(b) John xiii. 1.

(c) Romans v. 8.

(d) Luke vi. 27.

(e) 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

AFFECTIONS.

I believe, O my Lord Jesus Christ, that you are God and man, constituted by the Eternal Father heir of all things, by whom and in whom all things were made. I believe that as God you are endowed with all the Divine perfections; that as man you possess all graces and virtues; and that as Redeemer you are enriched with the most sublime gifts and prerogatives. I adore Thee with the most profound humility, on account of Thy infinite perfection. Oh, King of kings and Lord of lords; I recognise in Thee my supreme master, and I lay at Thy feet my devotion, submission, and dutiful services, desiring that, in union with me, "*all the earth should adore Thee, and sing a psalm to Thy name*" (a).

I rejoice with and congratulate Thee, O Lord, with all my heart, because of the wisdom, the holiness, the power, the beauty, and the glory with which Thou art adorned; and, also, because of that honour which is reflected on Thee by so many generous martyrs, by so many holy confessors, and by so many virgins who emulate the purity of the angels. Oh, would to God that I, too, following Thee, my leader and my king, in the third degree of humility, might be able to add even ever so little to Thy happiness and Thy glory! Oh, would to God, that all men knew Thee as their Creator, revered Thee as their Lord, loved Thee as their Father, listened to Thee as their Master, followed Thee as their Leader, and imitated Thee in the love of poverty, of sufferings, and of humiliations.

(a) Psalm lxxv. 4.

I place all my *hope* in Thee ; in Thee the treasury of all mercy. If I am sick, Thou art my physician ; if thirsty, Thou art a fountain at which I may quench my thirst ; if a sinner, Thou art to me a father ; if weak, Thou art my strength ; if I dwell amidst darkness, Thou art my light ; O my God, and my all ! When "*shalt Thou fill me with joy with Thy countenance*" ? (a) "*When shall Thy glory appear*" ? (b). When, O Lord ? When ?

I love Thee, O my Jesus, I love Thee *as God*, because Thou art infinite love, infinite sanctity, clemency, sweetness and mercy. I love Thee *as man*, because, by reason of the fulness of grace, and the treasures of Divine wisdom which are all contained in Thee, Thou hast an infinite dignity and goodness which nothing can surpass. I love Thee *as Redeemer*, because Thou art our head, and we are Thy members ; Thou art the Lord, and we are Thy servants ; Thou art the Father, and we are Thy children ; Thou art the shepherd, and we are Thy lambs.

I love Thee, because Thou hast first loved us, and has loved us even at a time when we were Thy enemies ; and Thou hast loved us to such a degree as, for our sake, to come down from heaven ; to clothe Thyself with our flesh ; to live amidst sorrows, insults, and privations ; and to die amidst the most cruel sufferings. Finally, I love Thee, because not content with devoting Thy entire life to our service, and shedding every drop of Thy precious blood for our salvation, Thou hast been pleased to leave Thyself to us for ever as a gift in the most holy Eucha-

(a) Psalm xv. 11.

(b) Ibid. xvi. 15.

rist. Grant, O my Jesus, that my love for Thee may display itself, principally, in imitating Thee in that third degree of humility which Thou didst love so much while upon earth.

COMPENDIUM.

I. Consider *the excellence of the humanity of Christ.*

1. His body is the living Temple of the most Holy Trinity; the most perfect work of the Holy Ghost; the sanctuary of every virtue. To beautify and adorn it, the Father employed all His omnipotence; the Son His wisdom; the Holy Ghost His love.

And if the body is such, what shall we say of the soul? His *memory* is the living mirror of the Divine virtue. His *intellect* gazes upon the Divine essence "*face to face*". His *will* loves it with an immense and infinite love. Who is there, then, that will not love the most holy humanity of Jesus, which consists in a body so beautiful, and a soul so richly endowed?

II. Consider *the excellence of Christ because of His divinity.* For thy sake Jesus Christ is both God and man; for thy sake God and man are united together by a bond so close as to form but one Divine Person. For thy sake God is called weak, sorrowful, mortal; and man is called immense, omnipotent, infinite. For thy sake Jesus Christ concluded peace between God and man; and by shedding His most precious blood redeemed thee. O wonderful union! O salutary effect of the love of Jesus! and after all this shall we not love Him?

III. Consider *the love of Jesus towards us.* And,
(1.) *Who* is it that loves us? It is the Son of God.
(2.) *Whom* does He love? a vile and wretched sinner.

3. After *what manner* does He love him? He loves him with an infinite love. And, moreover, this infinite love towards us was *continual, constant, and gratuitous*. Still more, not content with dying through love of us, Jesus wished also, to give Himself entire to us in the Holy Eucharist, making Himself our food and our drink. O love! O love! And will not men correspond with Thee?

CONSIDERATION.

On conformity of our will with the will of God.

Since the last end of man, and the scope of the exercises, is the union of the soul with God as the beginning and centre of all things; and since this union consists in love, which cannot be without an entire conformity of our will with the will of God; the order of things requires that we should now apply ourselves to the contemplation of this heavenly virtue, and, in order to reduce it to practice, consider (1,) its excellence; (2,) its equity; and, (3,) its utility. This conformity is defined "a habitual disposition of the soul, in which one is always ready to do or to suffer whatever is pleasing to God".

I. Consider the excellence of this virtue. The two greatest miracles which the omnipotence of God ever worked upon earth are the wonderful union of the Word with human nature in Jesus Christ; and the ineffable combination of the privileges of virginity and maternity in the person of Mary His Mother. After these two miracles of wisdom, love, and omnipotence, I see no other work either dearer to heaven or more beneficial to us than the union of our will with the will of God; for it is the triumph which

victorious grace gloriously wins over the human will without destroying its liberty. By this virtue the soul is rendered the garden of the Holy Ghost, the temple of God, and the tabernacle of the most Holy Trinity, where it loves to dwell and to take up its abode.

2. This conformity is the most perfect and acceptable sacrifice which we can offer to the Lord ; for, by means of it man offers to God that which he holds most dear and precious, namely, his own will. When one resigns riches, refuses honours, or renounces pleasures, he merely makes an offering to God of *what belongs to him* : but in sacrificing his own will he sacrifices *himself*. In every other kind of sacrifice he merely consecrates to God that which already belongs to God ; but in this instance he offers up to Him his free will, which is man's inalienable right. In all other kinds of sacrifice he gives God that which he cannot deny Him ; in this one he makes God the master of that which, if it so pleased him, he might in his malice withhold. See, then, what noble homage, and what a sweet holocaust it is in the eyes of God to conform your will to His.

3. Whoever practises this virtue becomes united to his Saviour by the strongest and closest ties of relationship, since Jesus Christ Himself has said : "*Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother*" (a). Nay, not only does such a one become related to Christ, but he, as it were, becomes incorporated with Him. As S. Bernard says : "*to be thus disposed is to be deified ; for to wish what God wishes—this is*

(a) Matt. xii. 50.

already to be like God; not to be able to wish otherwise than as God wishes—this also is to be what God is” (a). For as two pieces of wax when melted together become one, so man, by the conformity of His own with the Divine will, becomes one thing with God. Add to this, that such a soul enjoys the two prerogatives which belong to God alone, namely, impeccability and infallibility. For in doing the will of God, she follows the guidance of Divine wisdom, and therefore cannot err; her works are performed according to the standard of infinite sanctity, and therefore she cannot sin. And what else is this but “*to be what God is*”?

4. Moreover, the conformity of our will with the will of God is a virtue which belongs to all times, and to all states of life; that is, it is a virtue the practice of which is suited to every one, and will last for ever. For poverty, meanness of attire, and austerity of life cannot last always, nor are they suited to all persons; humility, patience, mortification, even the virtues of faith and hope must end with this mortal life. But to fulfil the will of God is a virtue which belongs to all times, and to every condition of men, since there is no one who cannot always and everywhere submit to the Divine decrees. Nay, after having done so during his entire life, it will also be his glorious occupation for eternity in heaven.

In addition to what has been said, it may be also observed, that this excellent virtue includes in itself all the others. Our faith shines forth in it, since we believe that nothing happens without the will of God. By it we manifest our confidence in God,

(a) St. Bernard, tract. de diligendo Deo. cap. x.

since we cast ourselves with perfect trust into the bosom of the Divine goodness. In practising this virtue we exercise the virtues of patience, humility, and penance, by submitting to the chastisements of Divine justice. Finally, it is the safest of all devotions ; since it is not (like the others) subject to the illusions and frauds of the devil. What further proof is needed to convince us of the excellence of this most sublime virtue ?

II. Consider its *equity*. Reason itself tells us that it is but just that right should govern wrong, and that that which is in itself immutable, and incapable of contracting any blemish, should correct that which is liable to change and defects. Now the Divine will is always essentially right, immutable, and holy ; whereas yours is distorted, inconstant, and prone to evil : God's will is infinite, wise, and just ; yours is blindness and injustice itself. In a word, the former is the rule of our conduct, and the infallible standard of rectitude ; the latter is but error and sin. "*Therefore, it is just,*" concludes St. Augustine, "*that your will should be corrected according to the standard of the will of God, and not that the Divine will should be lowered to the level of yours, for your will is depraved ; the will of God is the rule of your conduct ; let the rule then be upheld, and let whatever is wrong be corrected and brought into conformity with it*" (a).

2. The will of God is a *sovereign* will, for "*all things are put under him*" (b). It is just, therefore, that every human will should be subject to the will of God. For as it is necessary that all created

(a) S. Augustine on Psalm xxxi.

(b) 1 Cor. xv. 27.

beings should be subject to the Creator, because He is the first and supreme being ; so also, because of its sovereignty, every created will ought to conform itself to the will of God. Therefore, to follow the dictates of our own will rather than the will of God, is manifest rebellion.

3. The *will* of God is as holy and just as His Divine *intellect* is truthful and wise ; if, therefore, we are bound to put blind faith in His words when He *proclaims heavenly truths*, why should we not tender the most prompt obedience when His *holiness orders* or *wishes* anything ? Is it not the bounden duty of a son, a disciple, a slave, or a vassal, to submit promptly to the will of his father, his master, his lord, or his king ? If then, the first-mentioned titles belong to God, and the last-mentioned to us, is it not most just that the human will should be subject to the will of God ? See therefore the *equity* of this heavenly virtue !

III. Consider the *utility* of this virtue ; for even in this life it confers upon us two great advantages, namely, perfect *sanctity* and the most complete *happiness*. As regards *the first*, it is certain that our sanctification consists in the perfect fulfilment of the Divine will, in such manner that our holiness will be in proportion to our conformity with the will of God. Three arguments prove this. (1.) He is most holy who approaches nearest to the standard of holiness : now this standard is no other than the Divine will : therefore the more we conform ourselves to it, the more holy shall we be. (2.) The more we resemble Jesus Christ, who was the model of the most sublime sanctity, the greater shall be our holiness : now, all the sanctity of Jesus Christ consisted

in the perfect conformity of His human will with the will of His Eternal Father. Therefore it follows that we shall resemble Him the more closely, in proportion as we conform our will to the will of God. (3.) Finally, our perfection consists in charity; for "*love is the fulfilling of the law*" (a). But charity is nothing else than the fulfilment of the Divine will; "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me*" (b). Therefore our sanctification also consists in the execution of the Divine will; and the more perfectly we execute it, the greater will our *sanctity* be, which is the first advantage derived by us from the practice of this virtue.

The *second* advantage is, a *perfect state of happiness*, which those who cultivate this sublime virtue enjoy even in this life. For (1.) in order to be happy in this life, it is necessary that we should be exempt from every kind of evil. Now he who conforms his own will to the will of God, cannot be subject to any evils, either moral, by which we mean sins, or natural, that is, temporal calamities. For sin is merely the rebellion of our will against the will of God; therefore, he whose will is ever one with that of God, can never sin. Then, as regards all other kinds of evil, they are evils only in so far as they are opposed to our will; the moment we wish anything, it immediately ceases to wear the aspect of evil in respect of us, as S. Jerome says: "*Have you suffered any misfortune? If you only wish it, it ceases to be such; return thanks to God, and the evil is changed into good.*" Wherefore, if we too shall

(a) Romans xiii. 10.

(b) John xiv. 21.

wish whatever is pleasing to God, we shall be certainly exempt from every evil ; for as no misfortune in the world happens without the will of God, it cannot possibly happen in opposition to our will which is intimately united with that of God, and desires nothing but what is pleasing to Him. "*It is the will of God.*" Behold in these few words the medicine that can cure every evil ; nay, turn evil into good.

2. The full dominion and absolute control of reason over our appetites, is the greatest happiness which we can enjoy upon earth. Now, whosoever acts in conformity with the Divine will, is in all things master of his affections. He has no temptations to ambition, because since he is influenced solely by the will of God, he is perfectly indifferent to honours or a lowly station ; he is not envious of the dignities conferred on his neighbour ; the humiliations which may fall to his own lot do not cause him the slightest trouble. Since he is indifferent to everything, he cares not whether he be rich or poor ; he neither loves nor hates anything except what his God loves or hates. He does nothing except *what God wishes*, and in the *manner* that God wishes ; that is, with *as much perfection as possible*, and with the sole motive of executing the Divine will. This it is which truly constitutes perfect happiness upon earth ; and, together with perfect *sanctity*, it comes to us from the practice of that noble virtue—*conformity to the will of God.*

EXAMEN.

On Interior Recollection and Prayer.

Three things are particularly to be borne in mind concerning spiritual love, which will form the sub-

ject of our consideration in the following meditation. (1.) That true love is shown not so much by words as in deeds. "*The proof of love*," says St. Gregory, "*is in the works*," and we give this proof by ascending to the third degree of humility. (2.) That perfect love consists in a mutual interchange of goods. This we have already done, by conforming our will to the will of God, and thus consecrating to him the most precious thing we possess, nay, ourselves without reserve. (3.) That real, substantial love includes within it the desire to have the beloved object always present, to converse with it, and to be united to it; and this we shall obtain by means of interior recollection and by prayer. Let us, then, here examine briefly how we stand in respect of these two virtues.

I. *Recollection of spirit* is a habitual exercise of the intellect and the will, by which man *believes* that God is always present and *loves* him. There are two special helps to attain this. The first is *the observance of silence by retirement in one's own room*. You should not leave your apartment except when required to do so by necessity, charity, or obedience. Do you act thus? Or do you, on the contrary, go rambling through all the corridors of the house, and all the streets of the city? God is rarely present with persons whose hearts are thus dissipated.

With regard to our conversation, three things must be attended to; the *time*, the *matter*, and the *manner*; that is, to speak *when* we ought, *what* we ought, and *as* we ought. Wherefore, examine yourself to discover whether you are silent during the hours of silence? Whether in your conversation

you indulge in frivolous, silly, or absurd stories? Whether you weigh your words well before giving utterance to them? thus following the wise counsel of S. Bernard: "*When you speak let your words be few, true, and solid*". Place a curb upon your mouth, and beg of the Holy Ghost the grace never to speak except when and as the occasion requires.

The second help to acquire and preserve the spirit of recollection is the frequent use of the presence of God, which consists in eliciting oftentimes during the day acts of faith, by which we believe that God is always intimately present with us; and acts of *love*, by which, in His presence, we love Him with the most tender affection. This we do by means of frequent ejaculatory prayers. And, with regard to such prayers, we should bear in mind (1.) that they ought to be short, and ought to proceed not so much from the intellect as from the heart. (2.) Let them also not be too numerous, nor jumbled together, so that they may not confuse or distract the mind. (3.) Let them be addressed to God, not as dwelling far away from us in heaven, but as actually present before us, and within us. Wherefore examine yourself, and see whether you practise this holy custom of ejaculatory prayer: be extremely careful not to neglect it, because it is an excellent means to keep you recollected with God, and fervent in His love.

As regards prayer both *mental* and *vocal*, which is the principal means of keeping alive and nourishing Divine love in the soul, examine: (1.) whether you make due preparation before engaging in *mental* prayer; (2.) whether you continue in meditation during the *entire time* allotted for that exercise, and whether you do so in a *respectful posture*. and with

fervour of soul ; (3.) whether you spend more time in the exercise of the intellect than of the will ; (4.) whether your resolutions are always practical and directed to some particular point ; (5.) whether at the conclusion of the meditation you always make a short examen as to the manner in which you have gone through it. Look carefully into all these points, and where necessary correct any past defects which you may discover.

Regarding vocal prayers, and especially the canonical hours, examine diligently—(1.) whether you recite them in a becoming place ; (2.) at the proper time ; (3.) in a modest posture ; (4.) with distinct utterance ; (5.) with attention of mind ; (6.) in accordance with the directions of the rubrics ; (7.) and in the prescribed order. Should your examination lead to the discovery of past faults under any of these heads, correct them ; for God has declared “*cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*” (a).

The perfect observance of these matters will lead you to an intimate union with God, and to a tender love of Him. This Divine love will be stirred up within you still more in the next meditation, wherein we reflect on the following points. “That God deserves to be loved by us”—(1.) because of the love He bears towards us ; (2.) because of the manner in which He loves us ; and (3.) because of His infinite perfections.

(a) Jer. xlviii. 10.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Love of God.

FIRST POINT.

God *desires our love, because of the love which He bears to us.* The charity of God towards us comprises in an eminent degree those three qualities by which S. Ignatius distinguishes true from false love. For (1.) it manifests itself by great works; (2.) it liberally lavishes its goods upon the person loved; (3.) it is always present with us.

First. The love of God performs great things in your behalf. It drew you out of nothing, forming you to God's own likeness, in preference to an infinite number of other possible beings. It gave you a soul with its noble powers, a body with its delicate organs of sense, and complete in all its members, and furnished with many splendid natural endowments. It is through love of you that He preserves the world, causes the beasts of the earth to multiply, makes the plants bud forth, clothes the fields with verdure, and enriches the plains with crops. He has made the sun to give you light; He nourishes you with the productions of the earth; and He has created the air, fire, water, and earth to comfort and sustain your life. Add to all this the great work of human Redemption; the mission of the Holy Ghost; your adoption to be a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, an heir to the kingdom of heaven; finally, the grace of baptism, of a good education, and of a

vocation to the faith, to the priesthood, and to the religious state. See, then, whether God's love has not done great things for you !

Secondly. Moreover, God has given you without reserve all His gifts—nay He has given you Himself. He has placed at your disposal worldly goods [here enumerate them one by one]; He has given you the angels to guard you, grace to merit, and heaven as your future reward. He has given you Jesus Christ to be your Master, His life for your example, His soul and body as the price of your redemption, His flesh for your food, and His blood as your drink, when He poured out the infinite treasures of His love in the most august sacrament of the Eucharist ; so that though He is most wise and omnipotent, He neither knew how, nor was He able, to give you anything greater or better. Add to all this that He has promised you many other most precious gifts ; namely, the assistance of His grace, the habits of faith, hope, and charity, together with sanctifying grace, "*that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature*" (a). Has He not then given you Himself, and all that was His ?

Thirdly. Finally, God proves His love for you by being always intimately present with you—(1.) By His *essence*, according to that saying of the apostle, "*in him we live, and move, and be*" (b). We are surrounded and penetrated by God, more than by the very air we breathe. (2.) He is present with you by His *power*. It is through God you live, grow, feel, see, hear, think, reason, and remember, because He co-operates in all those actions of yours.

(a) 2 Pet. i. 4.

(b) Acts xvii. 28.

(3.) He is present by His *Providence*, for as His child He carries you in His bosom, He defends you, He fondles you, warding off dangers, and showering blessings on you, even "*making with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it*" (a). In one word, God is ever dwelling in your body, and in your soul, as in a temple, in order to prove the love He bears you ; because the lover can never endure to be separated from the object of His affections.

Now since reason itself teaches that we should return love for love, it follows—(1.) that you should also do something great for God, by carrying out with firmness and constancy the resolutions which you formed during the course of these Exercises. (2.) You ought also make an offering to Him of yourself, and of all that belongs to you ; more particularly of your honour, your conveniences, your health, and your life, thus remaining constant in the third degree of humility. (3.) You ought also keep yourself ever present with, and united to, your Creator, by means of interior recollection, of attentive and fervent prayer, and of the practice of the presence of God. O seraphim ! kindle in my breast a spark of that heavenly love, which rendered the practice of these three points so sweet and so easy to the saints.

SECOND POINT.

God deserves to be loved, because of the *manner* in which He loves you. For (1.) He loves you with an *eternal love*, having commenced to love you ever since

(a) 1 Cor. x. 13.

He began to love Himself—that is from all eternity: “*I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee*” (a); even though He had foreseen all your ingratitude and your sins.

2. He loves you with a *disinterested* love; without any merit on your part, or any hope of recompense on His. For, as Saint John says, “*by this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, . . . not as though we had loved God, and thus merited His love in return; but because He hath first loved us,*” (b), and this too “*when we were enemies*” (c).

3. He loves you with an *infinite* love; that is, as far as regards its entity, with the same love with which He loves Himself, the most Holy Trinity, Christ, and the saints; loving you with His entire heart, and with all the infinity of His nature; so that there is no perfection in God, and no person in the Most Holy Trinity that does not entertain for you an infinite love.

4. Finally, He loves you with a most tender love, “*carrying you on his shoulders*” (d) “*and his bosom, as the nurse is wont to carry the little infant*” (e); “*keeping you as the apple of his eye*” (f); having “*the very hairs of your head all numbered*” (g); “*always mindful of you that He may do good to you,*” just as if you alone existed in the world, and constituted the sole object of His infinite love.

Oh, in truth, my God, it is my bounden duty to love Thee (1.) with a *disinterested* love: not through

(a) Jer. xxxi. 3.

(c) Rom. v. 10.

(e) Num. xi. 12.

(b) 1 John iv. 9. 10.

(d) Deut. xxxii. 11.

(f) Deut. xxxii. 10.

(g) Luke xii. 7.

fear of punishment, or in expectation of a reward, but solely for thy own self. (2.) With an *efficacious* love, "*not loving in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth*" (a). (3.) With a *constant affection*, exclaiming with the apostle Paul, "What shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, . . . or persecution, or the sword?" (b) No, no; "*For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God*" (c).

THIRD POINT.

God deserves to be loved, because of His infinite perfections. For so *amiable* is He, that if the heavens were opened, and the damned could see God, even for a single instant, the intense hatred which they now feel towards Him would be changed at once into the most ardent love. Such is His *beauty*, that in order to gaze upon it, if only for a moment, the damned would willingly endure a thousand hells as terrible as that in which they now dwell. So sweet in His goodness, that if even one drop of it could fall into the infernal abyss, that place of torments would instantly become a paradise. So great is the excellence of His *sanctity*, that even one venial sin causes Him inexpressible disgust. So unfathomable is His *wisdom*, that He forgets nothing of the Past, knows everything of the Present, and clearly penetrates into all the hidden secrets of the Future. His *power* is so great, that with Him to wish is to execute.

(a) 1 John iii. 18.

(b) Rom. viii. 35.

(c) Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Moreover, He is so *rich*, that “there is no end of His treasures” (a); so *provident*, that He dispenses all things in measure, and number, and weight; so *constant*, that “*with Him there is no change, nor shadow of alteration*” (b); so *mighty*, that “*He is high in his strength, and none is like Him*” (c). But who is there able to enumerate His perfections, and the greatness of His works? “*Who is able to declare his works; who shall search out his glorious acts; and who shall show forth the power of his majesty; or who shall be able to declare his mercy?*” (d) and shall we not love with all the strength of our affection a God so great and so perfect? Ah! let us love Him! let us love Him! But let our love be real, let it be ardent, let it prove itself by works, so that the termination of these Exercises may be for us the beginning of a more perfect life, and that this perfection may go on increasing daily until the hour of our death.

AFFECTIONS.

O ye Seraphim! has the tepidity of man, then, come to this, that it is necessary to heap up arguments in order to excite him to a love of the supreme good? O my soul! through love of Thee, and for Thy benefit, God has performed most wonderful works; He has enriched you with favours beyond reckoning in respect of their *number*; of incalculable *utility*; and of *infinite value*; and will you refuse to return Him love for love?

Ah! unhappy wretch! God loves you; . . . God . . . you; . . . the Omnipotent, . . . so vile a worm,

(a) Isa. ii. 7.

(b) James i. 17.

(c) Job xxxvi. 22.

(d) Eccles. xvii. 2, et seq.

and He loves you with an *eternal*, an *infinite*, a *disinterested*, and a most *tender* love; and yet you do not love Him in return. O ungrateful being! you love a person who wishes you well; nay, the brute beast has a share in your love, if it displays affection for you; and God presses you to His bosom, He lavishes upon you tokens of His love, He caresses you, He showers favours upon you, He watches over you, He preserves you, He loves you with such unbounded love, and will you not think Him worthy of even a look, will your heart not beat with a single throb of affection for Him? And is this really possible! Can there be found a soul so cold, so hard, so cruel, so perverse, so brutal, I will rather say, so stupid, so insensate? For no soul can be effected with hardness so adamantine, nor with such insatiable brutality as not to be softened by the thought that God loves her, and loves her with so boundless a love.

O God of mercy, I know my ingratitude, I am ashamed of it, and am confounded in Thy presence. Ah! I have not loved love itself! I have not returned the love of a God who has loved me with an infinite love, and Who is most deserving of all my love, because of His infinite perfections. He has lavished favours upon me, and I have treated Him with neglect. He has loved me, and I have hated Him in return. But I repent, and I detest my hardness of heart. Thou hast conquered, O infinite love, Thou hast conquered. Thou hast a claim upon my entire heart, and I hereby give it to Thee without reserve. Henceforward I shall love but Thee, and I shall love Thee all the more intensely, because I have begun to love Thee so late.

I love Thee, I love Thee, O infinitely amiable,

good, and beautiful God. I love Thee, I love Thee, not through hope of future reward, nor through fear of future punishment; but solely for Thy own sake, because Thou art essentially good. I love Thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my powers, prizing Thee above everything—above all possible pleasures, riches, and honours, and more than life itself. I will serve Thee in that place, in that office, in that degree, in that condition in which it is your wish that I should serve Thee. I will imitate Jesus Christ in the third degree of humility; and I will imitate Him, fully, constantly, with all possible fervour, and with all the powers of my soul, striving continually after greater perfection. Ah, grant that I may persevere in this my resolution; and that if I have hitherto lived in sin, I may at least die in transports of Divine love.

COMPENDIUM.

I. *God deserves to be loved, because of the love He bears towards us.* The charity of God towards us is pre-eminently distinguished by the three characteristics of true love. For (1) *It performs great things*: such things has God performed for thee. He has created you from nothing; He has endowed your soul with three noble faculties, He has given perfect senses to your body; He has lavished on your whole being splendid qualities, both in the natural and moral order. For your sake He preserves the world; for you He makes it produce everything in abundance. Still more, He redeemed you, He sanctified you, He adopted you as His child, He conferred grace upon you, He has prepared paradise for your future abode.

(2.) *The true lover communicates all his goods with the object of his affections.* God has done this with you in a manner truly wonderful: for not content with having created so many things for your advantage, He gave you His own Divine Son to redeem you; nay, more, to become incorporated with you as your food, in the most holy Eucharist.

(3.) *The true lover is always present with his beloved.* God is never absent from you. He is always present with you by His *essence*, His *power*, and His *providence*. And will you make no return for so much love? Will you not do great things for God? Will you not give Him all that you possess, together with yourself? Will you not desire to dwell always in His presence?

II. God deserves to be loved, because of the *manner* in which He loves you. For (1) He has loved you from *eternity*, that is ever since He commenced to love Himself. (2) He has loved you with a *disinterested* love, without any merit on your part. (3) With an *infinite* love. (4) With a most tender love.

III. God deserves to be loved, *because of His infinite perfections*. So great are His *amiability*, *beauty*, and *goodness*, that if the damned could see and enjoy them, even for a moment, all their torments would be changed into delight: hell would become a paradise; and their hatred towards God would give place to the most ardent love. And will you not love a God who is so perfect?



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